

Implementation of School Councils
in Queensland State Primary Schools

A Dissertation submitted by
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KEY WORDS AND PHRASES

Accountability, Change, Community Involvement, Devolution, Educational Governance, Leadership, Participation, School-Based Management, School Councils

ABSTRACT

In Queensland, all state schools have the opportunity to decide the model of school-based management they would like to adopt for their school communities. For schools wishing to pursue the greatest level of school-based management, School Councils are mandatory.

Because School Councils will play an important role as schools become increasingly involved in school-based management, the operations of newly formed Councils were the basis of this research. The main purpose of the study is to determine, through both literature and research, what makes an effective School Council.

Although Education Queensland has identified roles and functions, as well as the rationale behind School Councils, clear guidelines to assist Councils with their implementation and to gauge the effectiveness of Councils do not exist. Because School Councils have only been implemented in Queensland for a very short period of time, there has been very little research undertaken on their operations.

There are three main stages to this research. First, an extensive literature review explored the theoretical, research and policy developments in relation to school-based management and School Councils. Second, a pilot study was undertaken of an existing School Council that had been in operation for just twelve months. The final and most significant stage of the research involved multi-site case study of three newly formed School Councils, the research being conducted over a twelve-month period to obtain a longitudinal picture of their operations.

Two general theoretical frameworks, based on the concepts of change theory and leadership theory, guided the research. Data from the study were analysed within these frameworks and within six focus areas that were identified from the literature and pilot study. These focus areas formed the basis for the development of criteria for the implementation of an effective School Council that were investigated in the three case studies.

The focus areas were:

1. promoting the profile of the School Council within the school community;
2. developing well defined roles, responsibilities and functions of the School Council;
3. developing roles and relationships of School Council members;
4. promoting accountability, monitoring and reporting responsibilities;
5. providing training and professional development for all School Council members; and
6. improving the functioning and operations of the School Council.

The research was conducted within the qualitative tradition. Specifically, the method adopted was multi-site case study. Data-collection techniques involved questionnaires, interviews with School Council members, observations of Council meetings and an analysis of Council documentation.

The findings from the study outlined a number of theoretical understandings and suggested criteria to assist schools in developing a more effective Council, including examples of strategies to support their effective implementation.

It is envisaged that the theoretical understandings, the suggested criteria and specific examples will be of benefit to other schools where School Councils are being formed by providing them with a structure that will assist in the beginning stages of the Council's operation.

CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION

I certify that the ideas, analyses and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award, except where otherwise acknowledged.

Signature of Candidate

Date

ENDORSEMENT

Signature of Supervisor

Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research was centred on the operations of the School Councils of three state primary schools. In addition, an extensive pilot study was undertaken on an existing state school Council. My sincere thanks go to the members of the various School Councils whose participation and cooperation were essential for the success of the study.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

P and C	Parents and Citizens Association
QASSCi	Queensland Association of State School Councils incorporated
QCPCA	Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Association
QSRLS	Queensland Schools Reform Longitudinal Study
QTU	Queensland Teachers' Union
SAC	School Advisory Council
SC	School Council

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis reports on an in-depth study into the implementation of School Councils in Queensland state primary schools. It investigates this implementation in relation to two broad theoretical frameworks - change and leadership theory. The ultimate goal of the study is the development of theoretical understandings and criteria that will assist in the development of effective School Councils. To achieve this, a multi-site longitudinal study of three newly formed Councils was conducted.

Queensland has only had a brief history of School Councils compared with most other states in Australia. In 1997, the then Coalition Government instigated what was known as the Leading Schools Program, which involved all large schools entering the program over a three-year period. As they did, school communities were expected to form a School Council. In 1998, the newly elected Labor Government abolished the Leading Schools Program, but not the move to school-based management. Following a major review, school communities were presented with various models of the concept of school-based management. Each school community was given a choice of which model they would adopt. Where schools chose the model with the greatest level of autonomy, they were expected to have in place a School Council. Whether it was under the Leading Schools Program or the models of school-based management, Councils were seen to play a very important role in how schools would operate in the future. Some Queensland schools have now had Councils in place for up to six years and depending on the model of school-based management adopted, many school communities may be deciding whether to form a Council to assist with the management of their schools.

The roles and operations of School Councils have been established following a study undertaken in 1997 by Crowther (Education Queensland, 1997a). On November 28, 1997, legislation was adopted by the Queensland Government to incorporate the operations of Councils into the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 and the Education (General Provisions) Regulations 1989.

The School Councils involved in this study were very much in their infancy. However, the study focused on their ongoing operations and development to analyse the effectiveness of the implementation process and provide a detailed description of experiences during the development stage. The study, therefore, contributes towards an understanding of the early development of School Councils. The findings of the study have been interpreted in relation to general educational theories related to change and to leadership. From the study, theoretical understandings and criteria for the effective implementation of Councils have been identified. Hopefully, they will provide assistance to school communities wanting to embark on the introduction of a School Council as well as assistance to schools who are in their beginning stages of development or who are struggling with direction or operations of their current Council.

1.1 Purpose of Study

The main aim of the study is to explore the operations of newly formed School Councils in state primary schools to identify and promote understandings and strategies to make them more effective.

To achieve this aim, six focus topics were framed to guide the research: (1) promoting the profile of the School Council within the school community; (2) developing well defined roles, responsibilities and functions of the School Council; (3) developing roles and relationships of School Council members; (4) promoting accountability, monitoring and reporting responsibilities; (5) providing training and professional development for all School Council members; and (6) improving the functioning and operations of the School Council.

The six focus topics were developed from the pilot study and literature study as factors that may contribute to an effective School Council. All aspects of the research were based around these six focus questions, but the data were also reviewed and analysed in relation to the theoretical frameworks of change and leadership theory, which helped to guide the study. From the data, theoretical

understandings and criteria for effective School Councils were formulated to assist them in their operations especially in their initial years.

1.2 Significance of Study

It is anticipated that this study will make a significant contribution to the development of School Councils in Queensland. Newly formed Councils undergo many challenges in their early years of operation. This study will help to identify and understand these challenges.

Newly formed School Councils are likely to need guidance and support. Education Queensland has identified clearly stated roles and functions and has provided Councils with guidelines to assist with their functioning. These guidelines are very general and are not necessarily easily transferred to the operational level. Many factors impact on the effectiveness of Councils and they need to be aware of these. It may be necessary for them to reflect upon and analyse their operations to determine if they are achieving their identified goals.

School Councils may exist in schools without being truly effective. This study is designed to assist them to reach their potential through enhancing their understanding of the role and functioning of Councils. It will help to develop an awareness of the perspective of the various stakeholders within school communities.

The scope of the study is restricted to three state primary schools and it could be argued that any conclusions about the experiences of these School Councils may only be a reflection of the schools involved in the study. However, it is likely that many of the findings can be related to other newly formed Councils. The developed criteria, as well as the identified theoretical understandings, should assist schools who are about to commence forming Councils in understanding what is likely to occur in their initial years of operation. This may allow schools to take a more proactive approach and provide a structure to support Council implementation.

Findings from this study are likely to inform Education Queensland on how School Councils are viewed and supported and have implications for Departmental Strategic Documents and Annual Statements of Expectations.

1.3 Study Design

The research falls broadly within the qualitative paradigm. Specifically, case study methodology is used to gain information on the implementation of school-based management and in particular the role and functions of School Councils within that management model. The case study approach is used in both the pilot study and the longitudinal study. A brief description of a longitudinal study and its justification are provided in the Research Design chapter.

Case study is a generic term for the investigation of an individual, group or phenomenon (Sturman, 1997). This type of research tends to focus on contemporary educational events and occurs in natural settings resulting in a rich description of the research phenomenon. Case study allows the researcher to get close to the participants enabling them to disclose a variety of insights and perceptions. The case study method is explored in more detail within the research methodology section of the study.

The longitudinal multi-site case study contains five main planning stages employing four distinct data-collection techniques (See Table 1). In the first stage, a questionnaire was designed to collect information to develop a descriptive profile of each of the School Councils and their operations. In the second stage, various members of the Councils were interviewed to seek further clarification and explanations for the data collected through the questionnaire. The third stage involved the observation of a School Council meeting to gather data to support or refute information collected through the questionnaire and interviews. The fourth stage involved the collection and examination of minutes, agendas and other documentation to support the operations of the Councils. The final stage involved

another questionnaire to clarify and prioritise the support required to foster an effective School Council.

Table 1: Planning Stages

Stages	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5
Timing	Beginning	3 months	6 months	9 months	12months
Questionnaires	*				*
Interviews		*			
Observations			*		
Minutes/Agendas and Other Documentation				*	

1.4 Research Background/Conceptual Framework

An International Trend.

The move to school-based management has become an international trend in most countries. As Beare (1995) described it, “there has emerged around the world, in fact, a new shape for the delivery of education almost universally involving self-managed schools” (p.9). In education, what began rather tentatively in the USA and Canada in the mid to late 1970s has now become very much entrenched, with both Britain and New Zealand adopting large-scale restructuring in an effort to move decision making and resources to the school level. Sawatzki (1992) believed that school-based management is no longer an interesting fad or innovation. It is now an educational movement whose time has come. Central to this new culture of school-based management is the formation of School Councils that will play a significant role in the governance of schools at the local level. The operations of Councils vary from country to country and from state to state. At present, School Councils, in some form, are part of the school governance structure in all other Australian states where school-based management has been introduced. How they are being implemented in Queensland schools is central to this study. Because they are still in their infancy in the Queensland context, there exists little research or support data to assist newly formed School Councils. This study seeks

to help address the deficit by examining, in total, the operations of three state primary schools with newly formed Councils.

A Personal Interest.

As a school principal, the researcher has been very much involved in his school community's adoption of its model for school-based management. Being involved in the second round of the Leading Schools Program, the researcher's school currently has a School Council in place. Under school-based management, the leadership role of the principal may be affected considerably. Principals may need to share their leadership. The success of School Councils may depend greatly on how principals view them. Therefore, the study of other schools' Councils is of high personal interest to the researcher.

Conceptual Framework.

The introduction of School Councils can be perceived as a change mechanism designed to achieve certain aims. Education Queensland (1997b) has espoused its rationale for School Councils and this is very much related to the ideals of school-based management throughout the world. Burke (1992) listed the ideals underpinning the devolution movement as: (a) the school is an integral part of the school community and community involvement will ensure that the unique needs of the school community will be met; (b) people directly affected by educational decisions should have a say and share responsibility in the decision-making process; and (c) participatory processes of power sharing enable all members of a school to deliberate over educational means as well as administrative functions and processes. Therefore, the rationale behind school-based management and School Councils should be based on the idea that greater cooperation between parents, teachers and administrators will improve the provision of educational services. Sawatzki (1992) extended this rationale to improving school effectiveness and increasing the potential for improved student outcomes. The definition of an effective School Council is then based on the cooperative effort of parents,

students, staff and school community members to improve the overall school environment to allow for greater improvements in student learning outcomes.

1.5 Research Focus Areas

As indicated earlier, a number of focus areas were identified through research and the initial pilot study as contributing to an effective School Council.

These were:

1. promoting the profile of the Council within the school community;
2. developing well defined roles, responsibilities and functions of the Council;
3. developing roles and relationships of Council members;
4. promoting accountability, monitoring and reporting responsibilities;
5. providing training and professional development for all Council members; and
6. improving the functioning and operations of the Council.

The six focus areas formed the basis of the development of criteria for the implementation of an effective School Council. Each of the focus areas is explored in more detail in the following sections with supporting explanations and research as to its importance and relevance to the study.

Focus Area 1.

The first focus area examines the development of the Council profile within the school community.

Schools may be at various stages of readiness for the implementation of School Councils. The literature and pilot study indicated that this readiness depends greatly on the school's culture of shared decision making. Within the school community, it would appear important that the school staff, the parent body and the general community view the Council positively and that its profile be promoted within that community. The level of support from the various stakeholders within each school community may vary considerably and also be at different levels. The

extent to which School Councils develop their profiles is investigated within this focus area.

Focus Area 2.

The second focus area seeks information on the level of understanding by members of the Council as to its role and responsibilities.

In Queensland, under the Queensland's Education and Other Provisions Amendment Act 1997, School Councils are covered by legislation. The functions assigned to them in Queensland are strategic in character and they are not concerned with the day-to-day operations of the school, which remain the responsibility of the school's principal. Councils will, however, have a key role in setting the vision for the school within a systemic framework set by Education Queensland.

Under the Queensland's Education and Other Provisions Amendment Act 1997, School Councils have the following functions:

1. monitoring the school's strategic direction;
2. approving plans and school policies of a strategic nature;
3. approving documents affecting strategic matters including the annual estimate of school revenue and expenditure;
4. monitoring the implementation of the plans, school policies and other documents; and
6. advising the principal about strategic matters (Education Queensland, 1997c).

In Queensland, the powers and functions of School Councils have been established and are legislatively in place for them to follow. However, it is possible that not all Council members will be aware of and clear about the implications of these set functions. In this focus area, it is intended to investigate this awareness and determine whether the operations of the Councils are in accordance with the powers and functions covered by the Education Act.

Concerns have emerged regarding the types of issues with which Councils concern themselves (Fullan, 1991). It needs to be determined if they are spending time and emphasis on important educational issues or are preoccupied with more mundane school operational issues. Also, it is necessary to examine who initiates agenda items, whether all stakeholders contribute to discussions and whether there are ways of enhancing this participation.

Focus Area 3.

The third focus area explores how the roles and relationships of members have affected the operations of the School Council.

Within this focus area, the different compositions of the Councils and the reasons for their variance in composition are explored. School Councils may place stakeholders in the educational process in new roles and relationships. In this focus area, the extent to which members are aware of their specific roles is investigated. This includes parents, teachers and the principal and the effect they may have on the operations of the Council. Research suggests that the role of the school principal has an important effect on Council operations and the level of shared leadership, positive relationships and teamwork that is developed within them. It is necessary, therefore, to determine the level of shared leadership, positive relationships and teamwork that has been developed within the Councils.

The success of the implementation of school-based management and the operations of School Councils is intricately related to the adoption of new roles and relationships of the various stakeholders. This focus area, therefore, is important in any evaluation of the successful implementation of school-based management.

Focus Area 4.

The fourth focus area investigates the role of the Council in promoting accountability through its monitoring and reporting responsibilities.

The rationale behind School Councils, as presented by Education Queensland (1997b), involves providing opportunities for members of local school communities to:

1. take part in decision making at the local level;
2. determine a clear direction and sense of purpose for the school;
3. take account of local needs and conditions;
4. determine the use of resources provided directly to schools;
5. contribute to the continued development of a safe, supportive and productive learning environment;
6. enhance school accountability to both the local and the wider community; and
7. recognise and enhance partnership roles.

The School Council is expected to play a major role in achieving these outcomes, as its main intent in Queensland is to improve student-learning outcomes. The extent to which Councils have determined their effectiveness in achieving their stated goals and the provision for monitoring school performance and measuring achievements is examined. This provides an indication of the extent to which Councils have made a difference to the overall operations of the schools.

Focus Area 5.

The fifth focus area explores the provision of training and professional development for all Council members.

The introduction of School Councils has meant that many school stakeholders - parents, teachers and principals - may undertake roles different from those to which they are traditionally accustomed. Councils provide the opportunity for parents and teachers to be more involved in decision-making practices. However, this may require additional training and professional development in the areas of school leadership and governance to allow more effective participation. Education Queensland has appointed Parent Development Officers to various Educational Districts. Their role is to increase parent participation in school decision making by developing a greater awareness of the need, as well as providing the necessary skills, for involvement.

Odden and Wohlstetter (1997) outlined a number of additional strategies that contribute to successful school-based management. These include whole-school professional development, principals who lead, dispersed power, dissemination of information, a defined vision and reward for accomplishments.

In this focus area the nature, if any, of professional development opportunities conducted for school stakeholders is examined. Sallis (1989, p.169) emphasised the importance of being involved in the process, as opposed to the content of training for School Council members. Wright (1996) suggested that the principal, or other members of the school administration, should not conduct professional development in order to overcome the problem of administrator dominance. The level of support provided to Councils, both from within and outside the schools, and any other possible avenues for development and professional growth, are investigated in this focus area.

Focus Area 6.

The final focus area examines strategies designed to improve the functioning and operations of the School Council.

Like all other formal organisational groups and working committees, within the school context, it would be expected that the operational procedures of the School Council be clearly defined and documented for all members. This would be expected to help in the smooth running of the group's operations and help to overcome any difficult situations should they arise. The effective functioning of Councils and the existence of any defined process for handling conflict are examined. Strategies implemented to develop this are documented as well as the steps used to review ongoing operations throughout the year. The School Council's level of acceptance as part of the total school's management structure is also examined.

1.6 Organisation of Study

This introductory chapter has outlined the context of the study. The following chapter presents a review of the literature and raises a number of issues in relation to School Councils and school-based management. It explores both theoretical and practical elements related to the study and provides an overview of the development of School Councils both in Australia generally and in Queensland specifically. The third chapter provides a theoretical base to underpin the research study. The fourth chapter describes the research design and the fifth chapter describes the pilot study undertaken as part of the overall research. Chapter six outlines the three longitudinal case study reports and chapter seven analyses and interprets the data within the broad theoretical frameworks and around the key focus questions. The final chapter summarises the findings of the study including proposed criteria and identified theoretical understandings for an effective School Council.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the literature review is to explore theoretical, research and policy developments in relation to school-based management and School Councils. Specifically the review will comprise three main components:

1. Part A: A theoretical review of the evolution of School Councils;
2. Part B: Development of School Councils in Queensland; and
3. Part C: Differing perspectives on devolution of decision making within the Queensland context.

Each of these components is designed to add further detail and dimensions to the research. Part A explores the theoretical evolution of devolution of decision-making, school-based management and School Councils. The link between school-based management and the development of School Councils is examined.

Part B details the development of School Councils within Australia and in particular within Queensland. It highlights their distinctive nature in Queensland and the current context of today's Councils. The rationale for the introduction of School Councils and their perceived advantages and disadvantages are explored. Emerging issues in the practice of effective Councils are also identified.

Part C of the Literature Review highlights the characteristics of devolution of decision-making within Queensland. This is examined from political, bureaucratic and stakeholder perspectives.

2.1 Part A: A Theoretical Review of the Evolution of School Councils

2.1.1 Devolution of Decision Making in Schools and the Move to School-Based Management

How schools operate can be identified along a continuum whose extremes are total self-management and total control by agents external to the school. All Australian states are now pursuing devolution of decision making to schools to varying extents, as have public educational systems in such countries as New Zealand and Great Britain. According to Sharpe (1993), devolution is a process

through which the control agency deliberately relinquishes aspects of control over the schools for which it is responsible, thus moving the school along the continuum in the direction of self-management.

A definition of a self-managing school is provided by Caldwell and Spinks (1992).

A self-managing school is a school in a system of education where there has been significant and consistent decentralisation to the school level, the authority to make decisions related to the allocation of resources. This decentralisation is administrative rather than political, with decisions at the school level being made within a framework of local, state or national policies and guidelines. The school remains accountable to a central authority for the manner in which resources are allocated (p. 6).

School-based decision making, therefore, involves the significant devolution to the school level of the authority to make decisions related to the allocation of resources such as knowledge, technology, power, material, people, time and finance.

2.1.2 What Forms Have Devolution and School-Based Management taken around the World?

The concept of school-based management has in recent years come into prominence in public school systems both nationally and internationally. Self-management is being referred to as a mega trend (Caldwell & Hayward, 1997). Sawatzki (1992) indicated that the name school-based management is used synonymously with such terms as school-based budgeting, school-site budgeting, decentralised budgeting and school-site management.

Blackmore (1999) proposed that site-based management in decentralised systems like the USA and the UK has produced different responses and different versions of self-governing schools than those in the highly centralised New Zealand

or Australian systems. In the USA and UK, school governance has been devolved down to a district level or local education authority.

School-based decision making or devolution of decision making to schools has gained momentum in a relatively short period of time. McCollow (1989) questioned why there has been such a rapid move towards school-based decision making and devolved decision making in education and wondered whether the push is to achieve greater educational benefits for schools or for greater economic rationalism to help reduce or contain government expenditure.

Dimmock and O'Donoghue (1996, p. 6) summarised the reasons for the shift to school based management as:

1. economic reasons - people are inclined to be thriftier when they are given responsibility for handling their own budgets; resource allocation can be more readily aligned with decisions;
2. managerial reasons - a better quality decision made by practitioners aware of clients' needs; 'better quality' incorporating greater responsiveness of, commitment to, and accountability for, decisions; and
3. political reasons - widening participation in decision making to include formerly excluded or non-participating groups, thereby changing power and influencing relations.

The support for school-based management can come from varying sectors and O'Donoghue (1996) outlined various examples of this within the school community. The economic rationalists would tend to view the advantage of school-based management as the potential to reduce significantly the cost of services. A greater emphasis could be placed on efficient management and cost-cutting budgeting. Politicians may view school-based management as a way of reducing the number of complaints they have to deal with, particularly when it comes to funding issues, resourcing schools and supplying special services. Interest groups, such as teachers and parents, may believe that school-based management

will provide a greater opportunity to influence decisions that are made locally. Whether the reasons for the shift to school-based management are economic, managerial or political, the all-encompassing benefit, according to Dimmock and O'Donoghue (1996), should be centred on improving schools and on improving student learning outcomes.

Sawatzki (1992) has undertaken studies of school-based management in North American and Canadian schools and districts, in particular the Edmonton Public School District, which is an exemplar for school-based management around the world. Sawatzki has drawn a number of conclusions about school-based management from his research. He argued that, for school-based management to be successful, it should be accompanied by additional funding and not be introduced for economic reasons to curb educational spending. Sawatzki believed school-based management should offer the potential for enhanced organisational effectiveness and improved learning outcomes. Related to these objectives, Peach (1997a) criticised the New Zealand and Victorian models of school-based management. He believed its introduction in these education systems was associated with cuts to the educational budget.

Townsend (1996, p. 6) has undertaken both literature research and studies in countries implementing school-based management. His results indicated:

1. a lack of uniformity in patterns of devolution from country to country, and even between education systems within some countries;
2. a common claim for any system that has undergone this form of restructuring that it will improve student achievement or the quality of education;
3. most writers concede that there has been no research able to show substantial causal links between devolution and improved student outcomes; and
4. a lack of research evidence as to whether one form of devolution is superior to others in terms of improvement of the quality of education.

Townsend also cited a number of studies that demonstrate that the implementation of school-based management has increased the workloads of both principals and teachers. Nevertheless, Sawatzki (1992) stated that once school-based management has been implemented, there is a high level of acceptance and few wished to return to previous arrangements. Caldwell (1995) has supported this claim, stating that the overall majority of schools undertaking school-based management would not wish to return to previous more centralised arrangements. He argued that school principals, in particular, have welcomed the change.

Because school-based management is still very much in its infancy, little research can conclusively determine whether there is a correlation between school-based management and increased learning outcomes. Most school stakeholders would agree with any move to improve student learning outcomes, and such improvement has been advocated as an important outcome of school-based management. However, Craven (1997) reported that what research has been done suggests that there is no difference in outcomes at self-managing schools compared with other schools. This is the view also held by Townsend (1996) who commented that various governments, both internationally and within Australia, are "taking a leap of faith in moving towards school-based management" (p.48).

Cranston (2001) stated that research has yet to demonstrate that greater involvement in schools by parents and teachers actually leads to improvement in student learning or even more generally in the quality of education available.

Sawatzki (1992) would disagree with this conclusion, citing evidence that school-based management has many potential outcomes for schools. These include greater efficiency in resource allocation, better meeting the needs of individual schools, improving decision making at the school level, improving partnerships at the local level, increasing productivity and improving accountability. These potential outcomes are explored later within the Queensland context of school-based management.

2.1.3 School-Based Management and its Relationship to School Councils

The term School Council generally refers to the governing body of a school to which a measure of decision making is devolved. Legislation usually prescribes the function and structure of Councils. School Councils are also referred to as School Boards, Boards of Trustees, School Advisory Councils and School Governing Councils in various states and overseas countries. The establishment of Councils is considered a further extension of the delegation or transfer of power and authority to the local level as they involve the sharing of responsibility and accountability by school staff, parents and community members working as partners. Under the current Queensland Government, the formal introduction of School Councils is a major component of the Enhanced Option 2 model of school-based management and is supporting the premise that schools themselves are best placed to make decisions about teaching and learning programs and what is needed to support them. Details of the school-based management options are provided in depth later in this chapter. Councils are, therefore, likely to play a very important role in the governance of schools in the future and to have significant implications for educational leadership. As such, for all Queensland state schools adopting the Enhanced Option 2 model of school-based management, a formal three-year Partnership Agreement is to be developed to formalise each school's commitment to this process.

2.2 Part B: Development of School Councils in Queensland

2.2.1 The Beginning of School Councils in Queensland

Queensland has a long history of parental involvement in schools. However, the first legislated School Councils were not introduced until the beginning of 1998. Early in 1997, the then Minister for Education, the Honourable Robert Quinn, announced Queensland's formal commitment to school-based management through the implementation of the Leading Schools Program. The Leading Schools Program aimed to formalise the involvement of all school stakeholders in school-

based decision making and also to influence how schools would operate in the future. Queensland was the last Australian state to formally commit to school-based management and the introduction of School Councils or Boards.

The Leading Schools Program in Queensland was presented as a new way for schools to operate and was described by many in the Education Queensland hierarchy as the development of a new culture within schools. McHugh (1997) stated that the Leading Schools Program was a significant opportunity for Education Queensland to develop a new culture which empowered people to use their highly developed professional skills to ensure improved student learning outcomes. McHugh also believed strongly that the Leading Schools Program would signal the end of bureaucratic decision making in Queensland schools and the introduction of more collaborative decision making.

Under the Leading Schools program, all large state schools (Band 8 and above) were to have formal School Councils in place. This was not an option for these schools and plans were set for a gradual implementation of Councils within them. The Leading Schools program, although no longer in existence, therefore provided for the initial introduction of formalised School Councils in Queensland.

School Councils or Boards, in some form, are a part of the school governance structure in all other Australian states and countries where school-based management has been introduced. In Western Australia they are called School Decision-making Groups. Before examining their development in Queensland further, it is helpful to briefly look at School Councils in other Australian states.

2.2.2 History of School Councils in Australia

Education in Australia is primarily a state responsibility. Until the early 1970s, public schooling at primary and secondary levels across Australia was characterised by a highly centralised pattern of administration and fairly rigid bureaucracies. Gamage, Sipple and Partridge (1995) described this bureaucracy as having the following characteristics: (a) most funds were centrally allocated, (b)

curriculum was determined centrally, and (c) tight controls were exercised through an inspectorial system. A change to this bureaucratic form of governance took place from the early 1970s with a move towards devolution of power. This was especially so in Victoria, South Australia and in the Australian Capital Territory (Department of Education, 1984). The 1970s were characterised by administrative decentralisation in the form of regional units in various states. This breaking down of bureaucracy and decentralisation was originally undertaken on the grounds of administrative and economic advantages and effectiveness (Gamage, Sipple & Partridge, 1995). The trend to decentralisation of educational services in Australia has been a progressive movement and has continued right up to the present time.

2.2.2.1 South Australia

In 1972, South Australia was the first Australian state to establish School Councils in state schools (Beere & Dempster, 1998). They are now mandatory and have considerable decision-making functions. Their size varies depending on the size of the school, but parents have to be in the majority. Their powers have increased since their inception and, from 1982, Councils have had control of funds, had greater involvement in curriculum decisions, undertook the appointment of principals and had responsibility for the evaluation of students and staff (Department of Education, 1984). These powers were seen as necessary to make schools more accountable to their communities and to combat declining enrolments.

2.2.2.2 Victoria

Victoria also has a long history of devolution involving established School Councils (Hunter & Coll, 1991). Councils in Victoria have more extensive powers than in any other state or territory (Beere & Dempster, 1998) and, since 1973, they have gained greater authority. This includes determination of educational policy, maintenance of school buildings and grounds and responsibility for the employment of any employees other than teachers (Hunter & Coll, 1991). They are mandatory and have considerable control over funds and a comprehensive range of

decision-making powers. Under the Victorian Government's Schools of the Future program, school communities can elect to 'go it alone'. Schools have been given the opportunity to manage their own curriculum and resources (Turkington, 1998). They can enter into financial partnerships, become specialist schools, employ and sack their own teachers and principals, manage their own budgets, seek sponsorship and operate in a more, flexible, responsive and autonomous mode. Currently, schools in Victoria, as compared to other states in Australia, have been given greater autonomy and are far more advanced along the school-based management continuum - referred to earlier (on p13).

2.2.2.3 New South Wales

From the mid-1970s, ministerial attempts in New South Wales to decentralise the bureaucracy by enhancing community involvement through School Councils were thwarted by professional and community organisations (Gamage, 1992). Following the publication of the Schools Renewal Strategy (Scott Report) in 1989, progress was made although agreement on the composition of School Councils remained an issue. Measures had to be taken to ensure that no one group had a majority or sufficient numbers to dominate the Council. By 1995, sixty-three percent of New South Wales schools had established a School Council (Department of Education, 1995), but they are still optional, primarily advisory and have no control of funds (Beere & Dempster, 1998). Their roles include advising on curriculum priorities, advising on staff needs, participating in the selection of school principals and managing school property (Beere & Dempster, 1998).

2.2.2.4 Australian Capital Territory

In 1973, the Australian Capital Territory schools' system was separated from that of New South Wales. Pressure was exerted by the Canberra community for greater parent participation in education decision making; School Councils were established in the Australian Capital Territory in 1976 and are mandatory. They have primarily a decision-making role, but do not have control over funds (Beere & Dempster, 1998). School Boards are responsible for developing the schools'

curricula but the Teachers' Union in the Australian Capital Territory strongly resisted any School Board involvement in the employment of professional staff.

Nevertheless, they now have a say in the appointment of school principals.

2.2.2.5 Northern Territory

In 1983, legislation was passed in the Northern Territory to enable the voluntary establishment of School Councils and, by early 1995, around eighty percent of all schools had a Council (Beere & Dempster, 1998). Parents must form a majority on the Council, which has both advisory and decision-making functions. The main functions include determining education policy, advising on financial matters and buildings and facilities, employment of staff other than teachers and public servants, and fund raising (Beere & Dempster, 1998).

2.2.2.6 Tasmania

Although Tasmania has a strong emphasis on the self-management of schools, School Councils are only optional and mainly advisory in nature. Membership comprises equal numbers of teaching and school/community representatives (Gamage, 1993). Councils participate in the selection of principals, budget decisions, review and reporting processes, the preparation of development plans and policies, and manage school property and buildings (Amies, 1990). In 1995, forty-eight percent of Tasmanian schools had approved School Councils while a further twenty-five percent had interim Councils (Department of Education, 1995).

2.2.2.7 Western Australia

In Western Australia, there are no specific guidelines for the establishment of School Councils. However, quite a number of schools have in place School Decision-Making Groups which undertake similar roles compared to School Councils in other Australian states. The Decision-Making Groups include various school stakeholder groups and have legislated responsibilities. This includes a role in forming school goals and school development plans (Department of Education, 1995).

Table 2 presents an overview of the composition, roles and responsibilities of School Councils in the various states and territories of Australia (Department of Education, 1995). It highlights the similarities and differences and demonstrates that there is a lack of uniformity between states and territories in relation to Council membership and functioning.

Table 2: Membership and Functions of School Councils in Australian States and Territories (excluding Queensland)

	NSW	VIC	SA	WA	TAS	ACT	NT
Council (C) or Board (B)	C	C	C	*	C	B	C
Optional (O) or Mandatory (M)	O	M	M	M	O	M	O
Membership:							
Principal	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Parents	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Teachers	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Secondary Students (1)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Wider Community (1)	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Term of Office (in years)	1-2	2	2	1	2	2	2
Roles and Responsibilities:							
Policy Making	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Budgeting	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Review	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Financial Management	/	/	/	(2)	/	/	/
Participate in Principal's selection	/	/	/	(2)	/	/	/
School day-to-day administration	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Resources and facility planning	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Staff Review	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Curriculum:							
Advising Priorities	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Implementation	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Community Involvement	/	/	/	/	/	/	/
Advisory (A) or Decision Making (D)	D	D	A/D	D	D	D	A/D
Initial Legislation	1990	1975	1972	1991	1994	1976	1983

Notes: * Bodies are titled 'School Decision Making Groups' (SDMGs) in WA

(1) Representatives from these categories are often optional

(2) In some schools, SDMGs participate in the selection of the principal

2.2.3 An International Overview

Billot (2001) stated that over the last twenty years political changes in western countries have resulted in policies devolving responsibility for the provision of social services, including the education sector, from national to local

agencies. One of the most prevalent approaches in the public education system has been the development of the school-based management model. Because the self-managing school focuses on the empowerment of parents and teachers at the local level School Councils will play an important role in school governance. The trend toward school-based management and the introduction of Councils or Boards has been an increasing feature in other overseas countries since the mid to late 1970s.

The United States, which has always been committed to the local control of schools, has more than 15 000 school districts with various forms of School Boards (Beare, 1995). Decisions being made as close as possible to the school level is strongly advocated in the United States. Although public education is a state responsibility, a substantial level of community control has been achieved with the creation and empowerment under state law of locally-elected school boards having responsibility for schools in a district, subject to state laws and regulations (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992).

There has also been a long history of community participation in New Zealand and Councils or Boards have quite extensive decision-making powers. Boards of Trustees were established on a mandatory basis in 1989. School Boards have responsibility for broad policy objectives and the efficient and effective running of the school including control over funds as well as having the option to receive bulk funding for teachers' salaries (Beere & Dempster, 1998). Responsibility for staff employment and educational outcomes are at the school level, but the government decides curriculum, assessment and accountability frameworks (Craven, 1997). Principals in schools in New Zealand operate as 'chief executives' to Boards of Trustees and under the relevant legislation, have responsibility for managing the school's day-to-day administration in accordance with the Board's general policy directions. Board members in New Zealand hold office for two years and are paid a fee per meeting for attending up to 10 meetings per year (Department of Education, 1990a).

The British system is a very decentralised one with much of the power and responsibilities that were located in the central bureaucracy now based locally, although there still remains a major review role located with the system authorities (Department of Education, 1995). The move to self management in Britain came from the Thatcher Government and has been portrayed as a mechanism designed to weaken the power of middle managers in the education system and to ensure the implementation of central government initiatives. The decentralising focus of the Thatcher reforms was coupled with strong centralising measures such as a national curriculum and national testing (Craven, 1997). The main aim of School Councils in Britain is to improve the quality of education and standards of achievement in the school. This involves providing a strategic direction, budget control, ensuring accountability and improving standards. The Council also has responsibility for staffing and selecting the principal (Beresford, 1998). There is a combination of approved, elected and co-opted members on the Councils. Numbers vary with the size of the school, however, there are a greater number of parents than teachers on each Council. Each Council is required to select a clerk (secretary) and this may be a paid position. Beresford highlighted that Councils in Britain can exercise real financial power and this is complemented by the legal responsibility for property and their legal liability under law for their actions.

Edmonton, Canada has adopted a self-management model, but retains centralised control over curriculum. Staff are hired centrally but selected by the principal and the school has control over resources for teaching and ancillary staff, equipment, supplies and services (Craven, 1997). Canadian Councils have a large degree of control over their local school and the process of selecting members is a very formal one, associated closely with local government elections (Department of Education, 1995).

Other countries, like Wales, Denmark, Sweden and France have also favoured local authorities or districts as opposed to more centralised decision-making authorities (Beare, 1995). Although the approaches adopted in the various

countries have varied, all have a focus on allowing schools to become more self directing and accountable.

2.2.4 A National Consensus

At the National Education Assembly held in Melbourne 2001, a National Declaration for Education was determined. Its goal was to arrive at a declaration that encapsulates the aspirations of educators and Australian citizens as the nation enters its second century. Under the heading of Control and Participation in Education, the following were highlighted:

1. it is appropriate for every school to be self-managing, to have its own budget, and the power to make decisions relating to its function;
2. every school needs a Council or Board, either governing or advisory, to oversee its operations (membership of the Council should be representative of the school's main stakeholders - its parents, teachers, the community and, where possible, its students); and
3. Australia needs deliberative bodies at national, state and local levels to involve education's stakeholders in formulating education policy (ACEA, 2001, p. 46).

This declaration reinforces the national support for school-based management and the involvement of all key stakeholder groups through the implementation of School Councils.

Queensland was the last Australian state to fully commit to implement school-based management and the introduction of School Councils or Boards on a statewide basis. If all other Australian states and territories have had some form of Council or Board in place for a number of years, why did it take Queensland so long to implement them? Does this mean that Queensland is educationally behind when it comes to school-based management and devolution of decision making? To explore these questions further, it is necessary to examine in detail the history of

parent participation in Queensland schools and how School Councils have developed.

2.2.5 The Queensland Context: An Historical Overview

2.2.5.1 The Ahearn Report

The push and support for parent involvement in school decision making has been around for many years in Queensland. The Select Committee on Education in Queensland (the Ahearn Committee, 1978-80) made two major recommendations in relation to school boards (Department of Education, 1980). The establishment of High School Advisory Councils was recommended and the Select Committee considered the potential role of School Boards was to improve public accountability by devolution of responsibility for decision making. It also advised that the use of School Boards in other states should be closely monitored:

The Select committee supports the concept of the School Board in principle, and believes that potentially this system could solve many of the problems that arise because different communities from different parts of the state have different expectations of their schools (Department of Education, 1980, p.24).

The Select committee supported the gradual introduction of school-based decision making. It stressed the need for children, teachers and parents to work together cooperatively and harmoniously. The Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens in 1990, as part of its official policy, called upon the Queensland Government to implement the Select Committee's recommendations and, therefore, provide for the immediate establishment of School Advisory Councils for all state schools (QCPCA, 1990).

However, only a very small number of schools took up the recommendations from the Ahearn Committee. Around the same time as the Ahearn Report, stronger pressure was also being applied by the Commonwealth Schools Commission to create greater parent involvement and devolution of decision making. This was achieved through the provision of funds for the Country

Area Program, the Professional Development Program and the Disadvantaged Schools Program. These programs required greater community involvement in school decision making. To obtain funding, schools had to include parents in the decision-making process.

Despite this, studies around this time by Sturman (1989) and Casey and MacPherson (1990), showed that parents and communities had minimal influence on school curriculum planning and there was lack of evidence of any real involvement by the wider school community at the local level.

2.2.5.2 *Focus on Schools*

In October 1990, the Department of Education produced its major restructuring document *Focus on Schools* (Department of Education, 1990b). It involved a major statewide review of all state schools and their communities entitled *Have Your Say*. The *Focus on Schools* report stressed that all the human and physical resources of Education Queensland were to be focused on serving the needs of schools. One of the recommendations arising from *Focus on Schools* was for a trial of School Advisory Councils.

Other recommendations from the *Focus on Schools* report were: (1) the creation of a newer, flatter organisational structure making schools the major focus of attention; (2) a change to the culture of the organisation through the application of corporate management principles; and (3) the pursuit of organisational improvement. These recommendations were the foundation for the current move to school-based management in Queensland.

As a result of *Focus on Schools*, 'participation' and 'responsiveness' were identified as key organisational principles in the Department's restructuring. *Focus on Schools* proposed an increased level of responsibility for school-based decision making or local management of schools. As a result, greater parent involvement was seen in schools in such areas as School Development Planning, School Reviews and some curriculum areas such as Human Relationships Education. More

important was the investigation and move to trialing School Advisory Councils in schools.

2.2.5.3 Trial of School Advisory Councils

A trial of School Advisory Councils was undertaken from July 1993 through to March 1997 and involved some 42 schools. The aim of the trial was to identify both successful and unsuccessful practices with School Advisory Councils. Many recommendations from this trial have been incorporated into the current guidelines for the introduction of School Councils (Department of Education, 1995).

2.2.5.4 Parent Support

The Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Association (QCPCA) has supported the introduction of School Advisory Councils, School Councils and devolution of decision making (QCPCA, 1992). This body has been a strong advocate for greater parent and community input into school decisions. Through the QCPCA, local school Parents and Citizens Associations were encouraged to be supportive of the Leading Schools Program when it was implemented.

2.2.5.5 The Leading Schools Program

Queensland's formal commitment to school-based management through the implementation of the Leading Schools Program was announced in early 1997. The Leading Schools Program formalised the involvement of all stakeholders in school-based decision making through the implementation of School Councils. The Program endeavoured to implement its own unique model of school-based management and its own model for the implementation of Councils. The Primary and Secondary Principals' Associations and the QCPCA supported the Leading Schools Program, but there was strong opposition from the Queensland Teachers' Union. Such opposition focused on the possible increased workloads at the school level, inadequate resourcing, concerns regarding staffing and the teacher transfer system, which may have been affected by increased school-based management

(QTU, 1997). The demise of the Leading Schools Program came about with the election of a new state government in June 1998.

2.2.5.6 Review of School Council Operations

During 1997, Education Queensland undertook a major review of the proposed operations of School Councils in Queensland. This review involved over one thousand responses from many school community groups and stakeholders. The results of this review formed the basis for the amendments to the Queensland Education Act in relation to formal and legal Council responsibilities.

The Report, *Building Trust - a Proposal For School Development Councils In Queensland* (Education Queensland, 1997a), presented a framework for school-based strategic direction setting and is based on three value positions that permeated the responses of Queenslanders to the survey. The first articulated a concern for ensuring that the new level of school-based governance becomes a vehicle for building trust in school communities. The second value position was a firm insistence that all aspects of School Council decision making reflect commitment to educational well being. The final value position was an affirmation that the processes of teaching and learning justify all aspects of schooling, including school-based governance processes. All three value positions were built around the premise of promoting the best interests of students in Queensland schools.

In addition, the Report recognised nine principles inferred from the survey data. These principles have significance to all the stakeholders involved in School Councils. The principles broadly recommended how Councils should be formed, their composition, the focus they should take and the various roles to be undertaken.

The nine principles were:

1. the focus of the work of Councils should be on setting strategic directions rather than on school operations;

2. Council membership should comprise equal representation from parents and school staff;
3. school principals should be prepared, and able, to assume multi-faceted roles, encompassing facilitation of Council operations, active participation in Council policy making and management of the implementation of Council priorities;
4. Council decision processes should be based on broad consultation with stakeholder groups;
5. the election of Council members should follow normally constituted democratic procedures;
6. Council decision-making processes should follow normally constituted democratic procedures;
7. Councils should be actively represented in the appointment of school principals;
8. Councils should ensure that a full range of community efforts in support of Queensland schools is encouraged and recognised; and
9. the implementation of School Councils in Queensland should be regarded as optional.

This Report and the recommendations contained were very significant and likely to have a large impact on the various school stakeholders and the process of school governance. The operations of School Councils under the principles of this Report would differ from those in many other Australian states. The consultation, which was involved in the collation of this Report, was designed to ensure that the Queensland model for school-based management and Council operations would meet the needs of Queensland schools and not just be adopted from another state.

2.2.5.7 Legislation of School Councils

The key legislation that governs the establishment and operations of School Councils is the Education (General Provisions) Act 1989 and the Education (General Provisions) Regulation 1989. The provisions about School Councils were

included in the Act by the Education and Other Legislation Amendment Act 1997, which was passed by the Legislative Assembly on Friday, November 28, 1997 and received the Royal Assent on December 5, 1997. The provisions of the Act and regulation about Councils commenced on January 1, 1998. Each Council had to have a constitution approved by the Director General of Education and a model constitution was prepared by Education Queensland, to provide authoritative advice and guidance to schools.

2.2.5.8 School-Based Management Options

With the election of a new Queensland state government in 1998, it was decided to conduct a statewide consultative process to assist in determining the future direction for school-based management in Queensland. From this consultation process, a report entitled *Future Directions for School-Based Management in Queensland State Schools* was developed (Education Queensland, 1998). The report outlined a number of options for school-based management from which schools had to choose the model best suited to their school communities. This was the main distinction compared with the previous Leading Schools Program, which involved one model for school-based management being forced onto all large schools no matter what their level of preparedness for school-based management. Many of the elements of the Leading Schools Program were still relevant under the adoption of this optional model of school-based management and the role of the School Council was still important.

All Queensland state schools have been asked to nominate which model of school-based management they would like to adopt for their communities. Three options were presented: Option 1 (Standard Option) contains little school flexibility and is controlled mainly by Central Office and the District Office; Option 2 (Enhanced Option 1) contains a moderate degree of school flexibility; and Option 3 (Enhanced Option 2) contains the greatest degree of flexibility and input from the school community. The Enhanced Option 2 model that provides the greatest degree of autonomy states that schools must have a School Council. For

Enhanced Option 1, Councils are optional and are only advisory in their roles. It can be assumed that for schools, which wish to pursue greater school-based management, School Councils will be mandatory and play an essential role. Of the State's 1271 schools that responded to their preferred model of operation, only 25% elected to adopt the Enhanced Option 2 model (Education Queensland, 1999a), but the role of Councils in these schools will be very significant.

2.2.5.9 Formation of State Association

On October 6, 2001, at the annual State School Council Conference, an Association of Queensland State School Councils was formed. This body was endorsed by both Education Queensland and the QCPCA. A draft constitution was adopted and office bearers were elected (QASSCi, 2001). The following aims of the association were endorsed:

1. to promote and develop recognition of, and interest in, the Association as a body representative of the Councils of state educational institutions in Queensland;
2. to promote the advancement of education through cooperation of the Councils in matters pertaining to their functions;
3. to promote positive recognition by government, industry, trade and commerce, and the general community, of the value of education in all its forms;
4. to plan, develop and market to member Councils high quality education, advice, services and support, so that they may be more effective in meeting their responsibilities to their institutions;
5. to disseminate information of potential value to state educational institutions;
6. to transmit the views of members to those bodies responsible for the development and implementation of educational policy;
7. to offer the organised assistance and cooperation of School Councils of Queensland institutions to the appropriate Minister, Education

Queensland, the Board of Senior Secondary School Studies and any other relevant organisation, in the interests of more effective operation of educational institutions;

8. to prepare and present to the Minister and/or other appropriate authorities the considered matters which have resulted from a conference of the accredited representatives of the School Councils of educational institutions in Queensland, or any requests which the Executive Committee considers relevant to any matter submitted for its consideration and/or by the Council of any member educational institution;
9. to provide a Secretariat, and an Executive Committee of people who have had experience as members of School Councils of educational institutions, for the purpose of offering aid to Councils and/or educational institutions; and
10. to encourage cooperation between Councils of member institutions in the interests of furthering educational institutions in Queensland and the organisation of such other conferences or meetings as may appear to be of potential benefit.

The formation of a state association was a positive step towards providing the necessary support and development for School Councils in Queensland. One of its major roles will be to advocate to Education Queensland the need to implement strategies to enhance the operation of Councils and to assist with improving their overall effectiveness.

Although Queensland may be the last Australian state to implement School Councils or Boards, it can be seen that parent participation has been promoted and that the development of Councils has been progressive and consciously planned over time. What then was the reasoning behind their establishment in Queensland?

2.2.6 Rationale for School Councils in Queensland

The rationale behind School Councils, as presented by Education Queensland (1997b), emphasised decisions being made at the local level to cater for particular school needs and the need to involve all stakeholder groups in partnership to enhance school accountability.

School Councils, therefore, provided an example of the formalisation of community participation in schooling. Limerick (1988) stated that parents, professionals and community representatives should serve as equal partners, recognising and valuing the competence and contribution of each, as well as the right of each to participate and contribute to the decision-making process. It was argued that the greater the cooperation between all school community stakeholder groups, the greater the chance of improving school effectiveness and increasing the potential for improved student outcomes. To achieve this, as described by Limerick (1988), would require the development of optimum teaching and learning environments, strategies and processes as a result of high quality collaborative decision making involving staff, parents and students.

The main intent of school-based management in Queensland was to improve student learning outcomes and School Councils were to have an important role in achieving these outcomes. Besides improving student learning outcomes for students, there were also a number of other perceived benefits of Councils.

2.2.7 Advantages and Disadvantages of School Councils

Until 1997, of the eight states and territory education systems in Australia, only Queensland did not have some form of School Council or Board. As already indicated however, this did not mean that parent participation was not encouraged and the benefits recognised. The Queensland Department of Education (1984) listed several perceived benefits of greater community participation in school decision making. It suggested that greater participation might enhance the education of children even though there was little evidence of a positive correlation between parent and community participation and student learning outcomes. It also

suggested that the school curriculum might be enriched and broadened through knowledge and expertise of parents and community members. It further suggested that schools might be more responsive to the needs and interests of the people they serve and more accountable to the communities they serve. Political support for schools, it was argued, might also be increased. By increasing community participation, it was argued that more people would be better informed about the nature and purposes of schooling and be in a better position to make informed judgements, especially when examining literacy and numeracy standards.

The same Queensland Department of Education Report (1984) also added a number of possible concerns of increased parent participation: (a) standards in schools might drop, (b) control by minority pressure groups might emerge, (c) education innovation could be hindered, (d) parents and teachers might not want to participate, and (e) community participation might cost a lot of money for little return. Many of these arguments are still being put forward today against the increased push for greater parent participation in school decision making and school-based management.

Craven (1997, p. 22) listed the following perceived disadvantages of school-based management, many of which may apply to the implementation and operations of School Councils:

1. change at the school level is harder to achieve or unwisely based;
2. the positive role of the local community cannot be assumed;
3. government influence over education is either too great or too little;
4. system initiatives are nullified and quality control is more difficult;
5. competition between schools is not desirable;
6. parental choice has a negative impact on schools and students;
7. provision for special needs students will be poor;
8. there is a loss of efficiency and economies of scale; and
9. the integrity of the curriculum is jeopardised.

Many of these current concerns are being monitored by the Queensland Teachers Union and they are keeping teachers, principals and school communities informed of their results. Because of these concerns, not all members of the various stakeholder groups are fully supportive of school-based management and the introduction of School Councils. However, there has not been widespread rejection of school-based management, and Council introduction has been implemented with little school or community opposition.

According to Beere and Dempster (1998), School Councils may vary considerably from one schooling system to another, but they usually share some common characteristics. They are formal structured bodies and include representatives of the local school community (usually the principal, representatives of teachers, parents and local community, and sometimes students). Councils are key features of an international trend towards school-based management systems in education and their establishment is intended to lead to improved student learning outcomes.

If all Councils have common characteristics, how then is the Queensland model different from those in other Australian states?

2.2.8 The Distinctive Nature of School Councils in Queensland

School Councils in other states have had varying degrees of representation, power and responsibility and varying degrees of success. Sullivan (1996) stated that it is apparent that not all Councils in other states operate successfully. The Minister for Education, Mr. Quinn (1998), declared that the Queensland model was unique, that it was tailored to Queensland's particular needs and that the best practices have been adopted from other states and overseas countries. Exactly how is the Queensland model different, what has Queensland learnt from other Australian states and overseas countries and what will determine if School Councils in Queensland will be successful?

These questions are addressed by examining five aspects of the implementation of School Councils in Queensland:

1. timing of introduction;
2. powers and functions;
3. composition;
4. training and professional development required; and
5. level of support.

In doing so, it should be noted that it is difficult to disassociate the concept of school-based management from the implementation of School Councils and many references will be made to both concepts.

2.2.8.1 Timing of Introduction of School Councils

Even though Queensland has not had a long history of School Councils, it has been shown that there has been a strong tradition of parent involvement. Many schools have introduced collaborative decision-making processes despite the absence of formal Council structures.

The introduction of School Councils in Queensland has not been rushed or forced on schools. Peach (1997b) recognised that school-based management and the introduction of Councils were not revolutionary ideas, which were all of a sudden being imposed on schools. There had been a gradual move to school-based management over recent years with more and more responsibility being devolved to schools. This was accompanied with additional resources in the form of additional grant monies and increased technology.

The Leading Schools Program has been designed to meet the special circumstances and needs of Queensland schools. It builds on the experience that has been developed overseas and in other states, but it adapts that experience to our unique circumstances (Peach, 1997b, p.3).

Peach also believed it was, therefore, unfair to compare the Leading Schools Program with the introduction of school-based management in other states and countries and that the model of school-based management adopted in Queensland was unique.

O'Donohue (1996) believed that school-based management should result from the acceptance of an offer from a hierarchically structured system to restructure for power sharing, effective school-based management and school-based decision making. In Queensland, the Leading Schools Program had attempted to do this by progressively involving schools coming into the program over a three to four-year period. Schools were to nominate for their inclusion based on their readiness for school-based management. The current optional models of school-based management also allow schools to identify the model most suited to their school needs. School-based management is, therefore, not being forced onto schools.

The Queensland model of School Councils is also not just imposed on school communities. Education Queensland undertook an extensive consultation process, which resulted in quite a number of modifications being undertaken from the suggested model that was initially put forward. As a result of feedback from the many school communities, educational groups and from schools themselves, quite a number of changes occurred to make the final model very responsive to the needs of Queensland schools. The positive responses to this Report affirmed that the Queensland education community supported the new strategic direction being undertaken through the Leading Schools Program (Crowther, 1998).

The formation of School Councils has not just added another layer within the educational bureaucratic structure within Queensland. The Leading Schools Program planned to reduce bureaucratic practices in Queensland. Along with the moves to school-based management have come significant changes and restructuring to Education Queensland. This involved the abolition of Educational Regions and Support Centres. Thirty-six District Offices replaced these from the start of 1998. It was proposed that any financial savings made in the restructuring would be directed back into schools.

O'Donohue (1998) believed that Education Queensland introduced school-based management in a planned, cautious and careful way so as to provide a clear

direction for all concerned. Because of the development of School Councils through greater participation over the years and the trial of School Advisory Councils, school stakeholders have had sufficient time to prepare for their implementation. This included principals having the competencies to work with teachers, work with students and work with parents as partners in a future focused, strategic process.

O'Donohue (1998), however, cited a number of examples of the introduction of school-based management causing severe stress on its principals and staff. This has resulted, in other Australian states, in a significant reduction of teacher numbers and an increase in teacher redundancies and also the closure of many schools. O'Donohue argued that, in Great Britain, school-based management was introduced in such a way that it caused severe trauma to many experienced teachers by averaging the salary component of school budgets, resulting in many schools being unable to afford to pay their most experienced staff. In New Zealand, O'Donohue also stated that it caused severe trauma across many schools, resulting in the reported loss of nearly fifty percent of principals. In all these cases presented by O'Donohue, the changes were forced on principals and teachers with a great speed and in a way that caused many of them stress-related trauma and/or loss of jobs.

2.2.8.2 Powers and Functions of School Councils

The functions of School Councils are legislated under the Education and Other Provisions Amendment Act 1997. Although they involve the approving and monitoring of school plans, policies and budgets at a strategic level, their overall role is still seen as advisory. The principal remains the responsible officer for the operations of the school. Beere and Demspster (1998) confirmed this view of School Councils within the Queensland context.

There are certain functions for which Councils in Queensland have no responsibility. These include (a) controlling funds, (b) entering into contracts, (c) acquiring, holding, disposing or dealing with property, (d) suing or being sued, (e)

conducting business by any means not authorised by legislation, and (f) establishing subcommittees. According to Beresford (1998), Councils in the United Kingdom have these powers and, therefore, these schools can exercise real financial power and can be held accountable for their actions through legal liability.

The Education and Other Legislation Amendment Act, 1997, according to Beere and Dempster (1998), makes it quite clear that Councils in Queensland state schools will be primarily advisory in nature and they are not yet mandatory for all schools. In comparison to some other states and overseas School Councils, they have limited decision-making powers and no direct control over funds. Although this may be the case, Councils in Queensland can still have considerable influence over decisions made and how the school will operate. However, they are designed not to interfere and intervene in teachers' professional decision making.

Education Queensland has given assurance that the current teacher transfer system will continue and that schools will not be able to hire and fire teachers. A School Council, however, may have a representative on the selection panel for the appointment of its principal.

Councils in Queensland have differing degrees of roles and functions when compared with other states and countries. Although not as autonomous as some, for example, those in Victoria and Great Britain, the powers are those that have been preferred by the Queensland school communities. This was clear in the responses to the 1997 Education Review (Education Queensland, 1997a). It was clearly stated that School Councils in Queensland should not have operational powers and be only involved in strategic planning.

2.2.8.3 Composition of School Councils

The composition of School Councils varies from one Australian state to the next. Pettit (1980), Hunter and Coll (1991) and Basher and Saran (1992) all identify the problem of ensuring that all groups within the school community are adequately represented. In Queensland, Councils comprise fifty percent staff and fifty percent parent and community representation. Most other states and overseas countries

have a much higher representation of parent and community members than staff representation. Prior to the review on the operations of School Councils in Queensland (Education Queensland, 1997a), concern was originally expressed by teachers and principals that their composition would be made up by a majority of parents and community members. With the adoption of this Report and the recommendation for equal representation of school staff and parents/community members, this concern was alleviated.

Councils in Queensland have tried to ensure the involvement of a range of minority groups that may exist in the community. This can be done through the addition of appointed members; each Council is able to appoint up to two appointed members. The idea of appointed members is to allow Councils to bring in members who have special skills, for example, business or promotional skills, and also members to represent interest and community groups not originally elected to the Council.

Councils in Queensland have flexibility in membership numbers. The total number of members must be at least six and not more than fifteen. This caters for different school needs and also allows enough flexibility for the varying sized schools within Queensland.

The school principal and the president of the school's Parents and Citizens Association are both official members of the Council. Besides parent and staff representation, Councils may also include student members. Where a school offers secondary education, at least one student must be elected to the Council. For primary schools, one Year 7 student may be coopted.

Overall, the composition of School Councils in Queensland varies from those in most other Australian states. Education Queensland has endeavoured to create a degree of flexibility in their composition.

2.2.8.4 Training and Professional Development Required

Because School Councils are relatively new decision-making bodies in Queensland, it is likely that an appropriate level of training would be required for

all members. Because principals, teachers, parents and community members may be taking on new roles to which they are not traditionally accustomed, the need for training could be extremely important. In the initial stages of the Leading Schools Program, special School Council Conferences were held for three school community members from each school involved in the program. Representatives from the school community were also invited to the Leading Schools Conferences. Additional funding was provided to schools to assist with the professional development of staff to prepare teachers and principals for their changing roles under school-based management and for their effective participation in School Councils.

Since 1999, this same level of support has not continued with the optional models of school-based management. There has been limited support by Education Queensland for the training and professional development of Council members. The responsibility for this has fallen very much on each individual Council to meet its own inservice and training needs.

Wright (1996) stated that a recurring theme in studies examining the introduction of School Councils was the lack of adequate training and development given to councillors. This was evidenced in the Victorian experience where Chapman (1990) maintained there was a gross neglect of the need for retraining and inservice activities designed to foster the learning of new attitudes and roles that were fundamental to the new style of decision making and management that was mandated. Caldwell and Spinks (1988) supported the importance of both parent and staff development in assisting to make school self-management successful.

The newly formed Queensland Association of State School Councils incorporated (QASSCi) has, as one of its major goals, the training and support of School Council members (QASSCi, 2001). Three state School Council Conferences have been held in 2000, 2001 and 2003. These have been the initiative of interested Council members and the efforts of Griffith University in Brisbane.

Hunter (2000) argued that training for School Council members should focus on:

1. understanding the roles and responsibilities of members;
2. meeting management;
3. consensus decision making;
4. agenda writing and minutes taking;
5. policy development;
6. strategic planning; and
7. personality styles and effective teams.

Wright (1996) added to this list the need for members to be provided with general information about the education system. Councillors require information about both the school and the department, its structures and processes. Caldwell and Spinks (1992) suggested that without this, parents in particular would lack the information base to enable them to be empowered.

Wright (1996) provided four recommendations regarding the mode of delivery for professional development opportunities for members:

1. professional development opportunities should be conducted simultaneously for parents, teachers and students;
2. the principal or other members of the administration should not conduct professional development as this promotes administrator dominance;
3. professional development opportunities should be guided by the assumption that School Council members are active, analytical and reflective learners whose learning is largely experience based and whose learning is enhanced by multiple means; and
4. professional development opportunities should be tailored to meet the local needs of each particular School Council.

Griffith University has identified the need for Councils to undertake workshops to reflect on their experiences and to develop a handbook relevant to

their particular Council. The workshops (Griffith University, 2001) incorporated such topics as:

1. the difference between strategic and operational roles of the Council;
2. key operating principles;
3. the generic functions of Councils and how they should be conducted;
4. the role of Council members and the issues of natural justice and ethics that are tied up in that role;
5. the nature of the agenda for Council meetings;
6. the role of the chair;
7. different modes of decision making which help a Council to manage its affairs; and
8. evaluating the Council's work.

These workshops are provided as a cost to individual School Councils and Griffith University is providing a service to Councils that is currently not being met through any other means.

2.2.8.5 Level of Support

The National inspection of schools in England and Wales over recent years has shown that failing schools rarely have effective School Councils or effective principals (Beresford, 1998). A school, is therefore, more likely to be effective where there is a good relationship between the principal and the Council.

Although the Leading Schools Program had the support of the main parent body in Queensland, its introduction, as in many other states, was not without incident. The Queensland Teachers Union (QTU) initiated a long campaign against the Leading Schools Program which led to a long drawn-out conciliation process with a number of guarantees being agreed to by both the QTU and Education Queensland (Qld. Teachers Union, 1997). A number of assurances in relation to school support, funding, resourcing and the transfer system were given to the Queensland Teachers Union to allay their fears with the Leading Schools Program.

The introduction of School Councils in other Australian states has not been totally successful. In 1973 and 1983, the New South Wales state school system made two unsuccessful attempts to establish Councils. Opposition by the Teachers' Federation was attributed to this failure (Gamage, 1993). In 1990, schools were offered cash incentives if they established a Council; however, only 117 were established in that year. Reasons given for this slow growth included the belief that many Councils were only used as 'rubber stamps' for decisions and that principals were not divulging necessary information and were reluctant to share their power base. This is a danger that could also occur in Queensland.

It is important to evaluate the success of the implementation of school-based management and the operations of School Councils. To make sure that this happened, Education Queensland commissioned the University of Queensland and the University of Newcastle to undertake a formal comprehensive longitudinal research project on the relationships between school-based management and enhanced student learning outcomes in Queensland state schools (Education Queensland, 1997d). It was to comprise a thorough evaluation of the introduction of school-based management and the success of Councils. This research was undertaken over a three-year period.

The results of the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study (QSRLS) were released in October 2001 (Education Queensland, 2001a). A key finding of the report was that there was no strong link between school-based management approaches and enhanced student outcomes.

The research literature is clear that school-based management, in and of itself, does not necessarily lead to enhanced student outcomes. Without sufficient financial and emotional investment in teacher professionalism, in the developing of a learning community, and in improved classroom practices of pedagogy and assessment, a managerial approach does not generate improved student outcomes (p.20).

Another key finding of the QSRLS research was that little to no 'prima facie' evidence was found to show that School Councils are working as a productive component of Education Queensland's school-based management model. This is a significant key finding and has implications for the implementation of Councils and their effectiveness within schools. An important recommendation from the study suggested that "Education Queensland should develop policies on School Councils to clarify their purposes so that they can contribute to enhancing the organisational capacities for all schools" (p. 22).

This recommendation implied that the purpose for the introduction of Councils was unclear and that they were, therefore, not being successful and contributing to the enhancement of student learning outcomes. Implementing the QSRLS recommendation will be a challenge ahead for Education Queensland.

Queensland endeavoured to implement school-based management and the formalisation of School Councils through its Leading Schools Program. Through its consultative process and progressive implementation plan, Education Queensland has attempted to make its model of school-based management responsive to the needs of Queensland schools. However, Councils are only one form of community involvement and other forms of parent participation may also have to be promoted. The previously stated aim of school-based management in Queensland was the improvement of student learning outcomes. Councils, although an important part of school-based management, by themselves will not achieve this goal.

It has been demonstrated that the elements of the Queensland model of school-based management are different from those in other Australian states. They are these differences that make the Queensland model unique. However, the issue is not about uniqueness, but whether these differences will achieve the outcomes of school-based management.

Hill (1998) argued, in line with the QSRLS findings, that there is little evidence supporting the claim that there is a direct link between self-management and improved student outcomes. He also suggested that the Queensland model of

school-based management be seen not as an end in itself, but as a means of establishing the preconditions for a renewed focus on teaching and learning aimed at improving student outcomes. This will allow schools to target resources in areas of greatest need as determined in schools by those most affected by the decisions. Hill is implying that, when a system of self-managing schools is established, the preconditions are there to make it easier for schools to change in ways that will improve learning outcomes for students. An effective School Council can assist in developing the necessary preconditions within the school community for this to happen.

The worst-case scenario for Queensland will be for school-based management to fail in its endeavours, similar to the partial devolution movement in Australia in the 1960s and 1970s and the resultant backlash in the 1980s (Sturman, 1989). The success of the devolution of decision making in Queensland will depend very much on how people within schools take advantage of the unique nature of that school-based management and develop the necessary preconditions to achieve improved student learning outcomes.

2.2.9 Current Context in Queensland

Under the original plans of the Leading Schools, it was expected that the number of School Councils within three years would grow to over 700. Small schools in Queensland would also have had the opportunity to form a Council and this may have seen the number expand to over 1000. Councils were seen to be vital for the future of school-based management and part of the systemic shift between home and school. A total of 412 School Councils made up of Phase 1 and 2 Leading Program Schools were already in operation by 1998 (Caldwell, 2000).

Since the demise of the Leading Schools Program and the introduction of the optional models of school-based management for differing schools, there has been a change in the emphasis placed on School Councils by schools and Education Queensland. By mid-1999, only 322 schools opted for the Enhanced Option 2 (EO2) model of school-based management. This is out of almost 1300 Queensland

state schools (Education Queensland, 1999a). Only EO 2 schools are required still to have a School Council in place. A total of 840 schools adopted the EO 1 model, which allowed these schools to choose to have a School Advisory Council or Committee. Exact information on the number of School Advisory Councils/Committees in place in these schools is not available, as these schools do not have to have their Advisory Councils/Committees formally legislated with Education Queensland.

Since 1998, a number of Phase 1 and 2 Leading Schools have, therefore, had their School Councils dissolved as they did not wish to adopt the EO 2 model of school-based management. A mechanism to allow schools to dissolve their Council has been inserted into the Education (General Provisions) Regulation 1989 by the Education (General Provisions) Amendment Regulation (No 1) 1999 and came into effect on November 5, 1999 (Education Queensland, 1999b).

The 1999/2000 Queensland State Schools Annual Report (Education Queensland, 2000) stated that Education Queensland had set a target of 400 School Councils to be in place by June 2001. Recent figures indicate that there are 356 Councils in operation in Queensland state schools (Education Queensland, 2001b).

Since 1999, there has been a slight growth in the number of Councils but Education Queensland fell short of its proposed target of 400. These data and the findings of the QSRLS research pose a number of important questions that have implications for the future of School Councils in Queensland:

1. why should schools continue to have Councils?
2. do Councils really make any difference?
3. what makes a Council effective and how can this be achieved?
4. what priority does Education Queensland place on Councils? and
5. what strategies and support have Education Queensland implemented to improve and promote Councils?

Mr. Jim Varghese (2002), the Director General of Education, personally supported School Councils in Queensland state schools.

The productive partnerships that effective School Councils build are essential in achieving the objectives of Queensland State Education 2010; and hence I support their continuation (p. 1).

Varghese identified the important role that 'effective' School Councils play in providing a dynamic sense of purpose for the school by taking account of local needs and conditions and also in leading change and improvements through democratic leadership. Varghese (2002) has stated that, although District Directors have a role in encouraging communities to form Councils, it is ultimately school communities that make the final decision. However, he commented that, once school communities have adopted the EO 2 model of school-based management, the challenge is to develop 'effective' Councils within these school communities.

2.3 Part C: Differing Perspectives on the Devolution of Decision Making in Queensland

2.3.1 The Characteristics of Devolution in Queensland

The Leading Schools Program implemented in 1997 was the first clear and detailed policy statement and policy direction setting to be provided by Education Queensland to formally implement school-based management on a statewide basis.

Before the introduction of the Leading Schools Program, previous state policy statements and reports had detailed the importance of community involvement (Department of Education, 1989). Schools in the past were expected to consult with the school community in important decisions relating to the school and parents were invited to take part in various school committees. School Budgets and School Development and Operational Plans were to be endorsed by representatives of the school's Parents and Citizens Association. However, actual parent and staff involvement was really at the discretion of the school principal with parents and teachers being invited to contribute to school decisions. The Leading Schools Program was to formalise the involvement of all stakeholders in school-based decision making, not on an invitational basis, but as a mandated part of the school's

governance. Parents and teachers were to be formally involved in the school's decision-making processes.

Such statewide policies as the Leading Schools Program in 1997 and the Optional School-Based Management Models in 1998 need to be examined to fully understand their significance. Leithwood, Jantzi and Dart (1993) believed that a policy brings with it significant implementation and institutionalisation challenges. Policy can be viewed as a course of action to achieve a desired end and policies, therefore, form the basis of what is to be achieved. Knezevich (1984) described a policy as a general goal-orientated statement of intent. All of these statements would be very accurate in relation to the introduction of devolution of decision making in Queensland. The formal announcement of such a devolution policy has quite a number of implications and raises important issues that need further exploration.

Focus on Schools (Department of Education, 1990b) was used as a blueprint for educational reforms within Queensland. The basic aim of this document was that "all the human and physical resources of the department will be focused on serving the needs of schools "(p. IX). This highlighted the need to move towards more school-based management with the premise that the best means to determine the needs of the schools would be through the personnel involved in them - the principal, teachers, children and parents and community members.

In Queensland, since *Focus on Schools*, there has been a gradual move to school-based management with more and more responsibility being devolved to schools. The Leading Schools Program was built on the experiences of other countries and states, but adapted for Queensland schools to meet their needs and special circumstances. The optional models of school-based management provided schools the opportunity to select the degree of school-based management that best suited the needs of the school community.

2.3.2 The Leading Schools Program and the Optional School-Based Management Models

According to O'Donohue (1996), devolution of decision making in Queensland, the Leading Schools Program and the subsequent optional school-based management models have found favour with different community groups for varying reasons. These include politicians, economic rationalists and various interest groups. The Queensland model of school based management can therefore be examined from a number of different perspectives including the political perspective, the bureaucratic perspective and the stakeholder perspective.

2.3.2.1 Political Perspective

Education Queensland's policy on devolution can be viewed as a process designed to achieve certain purposes. The main purposes of the approach to participative school-based decision making have been presented by Education Queensland (1997d). These include the achievement of increased job satisfaction, greater input into decision making at the local level, enhanced services to facilitate teaching and learning, enhanced professionalism for the teaching workforce, and increased opportunities for professional development. All of these benefits directly or indirectly relate to improving student learning outcomes.

These proposed resultant benefits of the Leading Schools Program are the Department's response to the quest for continuous improvement and quality in the provision of public education. Schools are, therefore, being required to be more competitive - to be better able to compete against private schools so as to combat the enrolment drift to these schools. The Federal Government's New Schools Policy will see an emphasis on market forces to determine where funding will go. For each child leaving the state system, corresponding funding will be lost to the private system. It will be necessary for state schools to perform and fight for their existence (McCollow, 1997a). This may also lead to some state schools competing against each other for students and funding which could destroy the collegiality between schools and school principals.

The move to school-based management in a number of different countries has been accompanied by a decrease in the educational budget (Townsend, 1996). A similar scenario has occurred in a number of Australian states. Unlike other states, school-based management in Queensland was accompanied by additional resources being given directly to schools; it was emphasised that the introduction of school-based management was not to be seen as a cost-cutting exercise (Peach, 1997c). Schools entering the program were offered up to \$40 000, with the initial Leading Schools also getting almost twice this amount. There was also the provision of additional technological support and funding. These grants acted as an incentive for some schools to commit to school-based management and the requirement to have a School Council.

Because of the additional funding to schools, there was less pressure on School Councils in the area of school finances. The role of the Council was not to provide the basic funding for schooling; this would remain the responsibility of the education system. Cook (1997) recognised this was not the case in Victoria, where the Government shifted its responsibility for funding onto schools, parents and businesses. Schools were being required to raise a greater proportion of their own funds through such means as fundraisers, corporate sponsorship and the introduction of compulsory school fees/levies. In Queensland, the additional funds provided to the schools allowed School Councils to decide how best to use them to improve student learning outcomes.

The additional funding given to the Leading Schools ceased with the demise of the Leading Schools Program. No financial assistance was provided to schools to take up the Enhanced Option 2 model of school-based management. In times of potential future economic hardships, an avenue has been created for the Queensland Government to give greater accountabilities directly to schools and also reduce its educational expenditure. Greater responsibilities could be off-loaded to schools without any corresponding increase in school funding.

There was no direction on how the additional funds in the Leading Schools Program were to be spent and it was left up to the individual school communities. There were anecdotal reports of some Leading School principals using these funds for office and staffroom upgradings; this would be difficult to justify, if improving children's learning outcomes was seen as the central purpose of the program. However, some schools used the money to employ additional staff to work directly with children in various areas as identified by the school community. The flexibility involved in the Enhanced Option 2 model of school-based management allows a school community to direct its resources into the areas of greatest need within the school.

2.3.2.2 Bureaucratic Perspective

In the past, school staff and parents have worked basically within a bureaucratic organisation at a system level. According to Weber (cited in Foster, 1981), the bureaucracy contains the following elements: (a) a functional division of labour, (b) principles of hierarchy and levels of graded authority, and (c) administration by full-time, trained officials. Many of these characteristics can still be applied to the formal organisation of the Queensland educational system. The bureaucratic organisation, as described by Weber, functions through its formal structure, which uses its formal channels of communication, regulations and organisational charts that depict status positions and their relationships.

Hoy and Miskel (1982) stated that there are two basic organisational patterns prevalent in modern formal organisations: the bureaucratic and professional orientations. Besides these bureaucratic characteristics, the educational system in Queensland also demonstrates characteristics of the professional form of an organisation. Principles of the professional organisation identified by Hoy and Miskel (1982) that can be identified within the Queensland context include (a) a system based on expert personnel, (b) greater autonomy, (c) development of personalised relationships and (d) functional/professional authority. The more autonomy that exists the greater is the control by stakeholders.

Hoy and Miskel (1982) commented that the characteristics describing the bureaucratic and professional form of organisations are in contrast to each other and may result in varying degrees of conflict and levels of uncertainty. When it comes to decision making in schools, some principals may subscribe to very bureaucratic practices while others may favour more collaborative processes. Teachers and parents may also hold differing views regarding how decisions should be made in schools. Rizvi (1986) believed that the values of bureaucratic control and hierarchical accountability are incompatible with the values of collaborative decision making and community-based educational improvement.

According to Beare (1989), many of the assumptions which characterised the bureaucratic organisation are now no longer considered to be effective as we move into a new kind of educational organisational structure intended to be both post-bureaucratic and post-industrial. Characteristics of the professional organisation are emerging in Education Queensland's recent restructuring.

Beare (1989) expressed concern that it is not the needs of the school that are being met, but rather the economic and political needs of our nation. Many of the changes that are occurring are being mandated by forces outside of education and are still occurring through a 'top down' process. Beare (1989) argued that, although the centralised education bureaucracies have decreased in actual size, their power seems to have increased. Real control has been tightened through mechanisms of accountability. Mintzberg (1983) suggested, however, that organisations could be bureaucratic without being centralised.

As reported by the Queensland Teachers Journal (1992), "small elite policy making groups have sloughed off to schools and their communities, responsibilities that are decided centrally" (p. 10).

Central powers would seem to be actually increasing in a time when devolution is being emphasised. Instead of schools having greater control over their operations, central office control seems to have grown; schools are being allocated the job of implementing educational agendas and national priorities. A

good example of this is the implementation of the National Standards Framework that will affect all schools. Is this the real extent of devolution of power with the priorities being determined and decided at a National or Central Office level?

Angus (1992, p. 7) summarised this very well:

It seems clear that there is a simultaneous shift in the direction of decentralisation for some kinds of decisions, and centralisation for others. In particular central governments are assuming, or in some cases returning to, a powerful role in setting broad educational goals establishing priorities and building frameworks for accountability so that school or institutional level decisions are made within a broad framework of centrally determined goals and priorities, within the constraints of a devolved budget.

Under school-based management, schools are being given more responsibilities. It is true that more and more decisions are being made at the school level, but many of the guidelines, priorities, goals and directions are still being imposed on schools in a bureaucratic fashion. Angus and Rizvi (1986) stated strongly that, "the language of devolution of authority smacks of delegation of only limited discretion which has been centrally mandated " (p. 17).

Until recently, there has been no defined policy on devolution in Queensland. This has resulted in some uncertainty, conflict and resentment. O'Donohue (1994) maintained that, within our schools, there is still a feeling by the people at the grass roots of not being in control. Instead of empowering people, devolution has reduced their feeling of being worthwhile. What the Department is advocating in regard to devolution and what is actually being implemented would appear not always to be consistent. This has brought adverse reactions and cynicism from some of the stakeholders within schools about the school-based management process. If the rhetoric of our system is to "value people" (O'Donohue, 1994, p. 3), then true devolution of decision making needs to take place.

Education Queensland, through its policies, has expressed that there is a need for a genuine partnership to exist among those with a stake in education and a need for a reduction of bureaucratic practices:

Participative planning which draws on the experience, knowledge and skills of groups and individuals within the school community will enhance the effectiveness of schools (Department of Education, 1990c, p.1).

Participative planning should result in decisions being made at a school level by the stakeholders within, and not forced upon them by District Office and Central Office staff. Ideally, this would result in school goals being set by those with a direct interest in the school, and not by personnel outside the school who have little knowledge of the school and its community.

O' Donohue (1994) emphasised that whether the implications of devolution on schools are viewed at a system level or at a local school level, it has to be 'genuine' devolution, whereby schools and stakeholders are truly empowered resulting in greater educational benefits. He cited that when Central Office or school principals dictate the devolution process, they are still in control and teacher and parent groups may only feel manipulated and used. Devolution is then still taking place in a bureaucratic structure with a top-down process. School-based management should not be imposed upon schools. It could be argued that this was the case with the introduction of the Leading Schools Program whereby all larger schools over a three-year time frame were expected to be part of the program no matter their preparedness for school-based management. The optional model of school-based management gave school communities the choice to adopt the degree of school-based management that best suited their needs.

Education Queensland underwent restructuring in 1998 with the abolition of Educational Regions and School Support Centres. They were replaced by thirty-six District Offices. This number may be further reduced with the amalgamation of

several District Offices. The purpose of the restructuring was to create a flatter organisational structure where decisions are made closer to the schools.

The Leading Schools Program planned to reduce bureaucratic structures within Education Queensland. The structures within the Department may have become less complex with fewer levels, but this does not necessarily mean that bureaucratic practices have been reduced. In conjunction with devolution of decision-making, schools are also being held more accountable. They are now accountable to the Department and to the school community. Such accountability measures have been introduced with a view to school improvement of services. Roles and responsibilities of principals and teachers are being determined under various departmental professional development framework documents. Performance of principals and teachers are to be gauged against the overall school's performance. A principal's performance and review, as well as proposed teacher reviews, will link very closely to the school's performance. Both the District Director and the school community are to monitor this. As part of the school-based management initiatives in Queensland, each stakeholder group will be given greater responsibility, but with this responsibility comes corresponding accountability. Principals and teachers will be held accountable for the performance and achievement of the students in the school.

2.3.2.3 Stakeholder Perspective

Within the primary school setting, the various stakeholders include the principal, other administrators, teachers, ancillary staff, parents and community members and, to a lesser degree, the students themselves. Devolved decision-making will influence the roles of each of these groups and have implications for their relationships.

School-based management will enable and encourage:

1. teachers to more effectively exercise their professional skill judgement;
2. principals to become true educational leaders of their schools;

3. staff to be involved in decisions that affect their school; and
4. students to benefit from the improved quality of education

(Education Queensland, 1997e).

The impact of devolution on schools has resulted in a gradual change in the roles of the various stakeholder groups and how schools operate. These changes will be accentuated as the devolution process becomes more formalised. More parent participation has been seen as a way of democratising the education system, a way of strengthening public confidence in schools, and the best way of making teachers accountable (McCollow, 1989).

Cranston (2001) reported that enhanced community involvement led to:

1. wider and greater 'ownership' of the school - its vision and priorities;
2. greater diversity of views and expertise as inputs to decision making;
3. development of more inclusive partnerships among teachers and parents; and
4. enhanced professional culture among teachers (p. 18).

Traditionally, within many schools, parents have been kept out of the decision-making process. It may, therefore, be difficult for them now within the Enhanced Option 2 Model to formally participate in collaborative decision making. The parent groups may need special training in leadership and governance to participate effectively.

Some teachers and principals may feel threatened by the additional power or responsibility given to parents. Cranston (2000) discovered that a number of tensions and dilemmas emerged as a result of the changes in the roles and responsibilities of principals in response to school based management. The traditional role of the Parents and Citizens Association consisted of fund raising for additional school resources and the maintenance and beautification of grounds. Now parents are encouraged to be part of various school committees and participate in all school decisions.

The Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens Association (QCPCA) has supported the introduction of School Councils and devolution of decision making (QCPCA, 1992). This body has been a strong advocate for greater parent and community input into school decisions. Through the QCPCA, local school Parents and Citizens Associations have been encouraged to be supportive of greater decision making at the school level. The QCPCA believes that the best decisions are made when all stakeholders, including parents and teachers, are involved in the decision-making process (Parker, 1996). A challenge to school principals and school communities will be to involve as many parents as possible in school-based management.

The Leading Schools Program had the support of the main parent body in Queensland, but the Queensland Teachers' Union was not in favour of many aspects of the program. A number of teachers were sceptical of the implications of school-based management and, therefore, not receptive to its implementation (QASSP, 1997). On behalf of its members, the QTU expressed a concern over the anticipated increased workload of teachers under the Leading Schools Program (QTU, 1997). Teachers are expected to be involved in a number of committees, for example School Councils and management committees, which can be quite time consuming. Some teachers may opt out, not wanting to take part in collaborative decision making because it will only detract from their main responsibility - their teaching role in the classroom. McCollow (1997b) stated that teachers are often expected to use time and energy for decision making in areas they would rather leave to administrators. McCollow was unsure whether teachers really wanted increased decision-making authority when it came to school policy and operational matters.

The solution to these concerns, according to Peach (1997d), was for Education Queensland to provide additional funding and the necessary professional development. Under school-based management, a number of further benefits to teachers was proposed. These included teachers having greater opportunities to

express professional judgements, having greater input and control over their work, being able to work collaboratively with administrators and parents, and being able to develop leadership roles within the school (Education Queensland, 1997e). Hargreaves (1993) agreed with these potential benefits, arguing that by increasing teacher professionalism and involvement in collaborative decision making, the potential is there to improve school effectiveness through improving the quality of student learning and the quality of teaching.

2.3.3 Conclusion

It is expected that devolution and school-based management policies in Queensland will have a profound effect on how schools operate and influence the roles undertaken by all school stakeholders. The role of the School Council will be linked closely to the success of school-based management.

Craven (1997) highlighted two important factors that are essential for the success of school-based management and devolution of decision making. There is a need for an effective School Council and an effective partnership between schools and central and district management. The role of the principal may greatly influence the success of these two factors. Greater responsibility will provide principals and School Councils the opportunity to make a significant contribution to the development and effectiveness of their schools.

However, there are a number of issues and questions that will need further exploration. Three important issues are: (1) the ongoing monitoring of the devolution of decision-making process and how it is being implemented in schools, (2) continuing to gauge the effectiveness of school-based management and (3) supporting the role of School Councils in the overall picture of school-based management.

A number of further questions need to be kept in mind. In the current restructuring within Education Queensland, responsibility and control are being devolved to schools. Will schools that adopt the EO2 model of school-based management want to extend its level of devolution of decision making? Is this the

final stage of school-based management or will it continue to move along the continuum towards total self-management of schools? Now that schools are getting the 'taste' of school-based management, will school communities demand more autonomy? Are we seeing only the beginning stages of school-based management? Many EO2 school principals and School Councils are now having greater input into their staff composition. This has extended to some EO2 schools in the South Coast Districts actually advertising for teachers with particular skills. Will this eventually lead to the demise of the transfer system with school principals and school communities wanting complete control over the employment of their school staff? Is the school in the best position to do this?

2.4 Summary

The review of the literature has highlighted the complex nature of School Councils and the variations in the perceptions of participants in this process. A range of emergent issues has been identified in relation to the role and operations of Councils, the role and functioning of key stakeholders, the purposes behind Council implementation and their overall effectiveness. Further investigation of these key areas was investigated within the pilot study, which is reported later. These issues which emerged from the literature helped to develop key focus areas for both the pilot study and the main longitudinal study. The literature review, therefore, contributed significantly to the design of this overall study by highlighting issues believed to be relevant to the effective operation of School Councils. The following chapter draws on key elements of the literature review to place the current research study in a theoretical framework.

CHAPTER 3: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The literature review to this point has provided a comprehensive overview of the nature of school-based management, the development of School Councils and their nature in Queensland. This chapter provides a theoretical base to underpin the study.

The research is in the qualitative tradition and, in line with common practice in that tradition, a general theoretical framework has been developed to guide it. The thrust of the research is to 'test' theory. This is based on the identified theories, which provide the framework for the data analysis and interpretation. At the same time, it is anticipated that some conceptual understandings might emerge during the course of the study. It is argued that the framework should be flexible enough to allow new insights to be drawn into it during the process of investigation. In other words, the research, for the majority, is theory testing and to a lesser extent, is theory development. However, the constructs, which emerge from the analysis of the data, should be regarded as speculative since their support rests in the data, the validity of which would be strengthened with repetition and triangulation.

As a result of the literature review into school-based management, it was assumed that the introduction of School Councils had the capacity to influence the operations of schools and change the roles of school stakeholder groups. School Councils would seem to provide the opportunity for changing the context of how schools function and operate, changing the traditional roles of principals, teachers and parents and changing the traditional styles of leadership within schools. Consequently, one of the theoretical frameworks guiding the research is change theory.

Within this theory one needs to be clear on how and why educational change takes place and the limitations on implementing change. Educational change is acknowledged as a very complex process.

A second theoretical framework is leadership theory. It was hypothesised that the role of the principal in influencing change would be crucial and, in turn, the

introduction of Councils had the potential to fundamentally change that role. Cranston (2000), in his research, found that the roles and responsibilities of principals have changed as have the skills and capacities needed to undertake school based management.

For school leaders who are often experienced in 'old ways' of working in schools, shifting to 'new ways' of operating may create difficulties. For School Councils to be effective, it is argued that there needs to be shared leadership whereby teachers and parents will also be leaders and where there is a greater focus on teamwork (Wallace, 1995).

The two theoretical frameworks of Change Theory and Leadership Theory are explored in further detail in the following sections.

3.1 Change Theory

Change in schools seems to be accelerating, discontinuous, irregular, threatening, rapid, and challenging. It can create a climate of social and political upheaval and turbulence as well as great expectations and excitement. Schools are increasingly woven into this social, political and economic sea of change.... almost like a tidal drift increasingly and incessantly lapping at the school gate (Wilkinson, 1997, p.1).

The formal introduction of school-based management and School Councils into Queensland state primary schools is another form of change affecting all school stakeholders. Wilkinson (1997) stated that principals, School Council chairpersons, Parents and Citizens Association presidents, teachers and school community members will have to change their roles, values and take reconsidered actions for these new times.

Duignan and Macpherson (1991) argued that school leaders need a process to respond to change so that school life can be improved. Such a process needs to

have an appropriate theory of change. Educational change, according to Duignan and Macpherson, is fundamentally dependent on changing individuals.

The change process is essentially a learning process and it is through this learning process that improvements occur over time (Duignan and Macpherson, 1991, p. 10).

Askew and Cornell (1998) have noted that although change in education is not uncommon, the majority of change is imposed externally with little understanding by those most affected by it. Change of this nature, they suggested, would have little lasting effect. To change schools means changing the people within them.

It has also been argued that, for change to be effective and lasting, it must involve changing cultures within classrooms and schools (Fullan, 1991). Wallace (1995) supported this view by stating that beliefs about schooling are entrenched and, despite changing conditions, these beliefs linger on. Such traditional beliefs underlie a rational, regulated or bureaucratic model of organisations whereas in contrast, new beliefs lead to a more flexible or professional model. Challenging traditional beliefs, according to Wallace, will lead to different ways of thinking about schools and new ways of working.

Nadebaum (1991) argued strongly that school systems have been remarkably resilient through time and have perpetuated their kind successfully in the face of strong forces for change. Similarly, Wallace (1995) argued that a major criticism of schools is that they are too formalised and rigid and are struggling to respond to change. The biggest challenge to schools, according to Wallace, is shifting from a bureaucratic to a professional organisation.

The introduction of School Councils can be seen by many involved in schools as a change externally thrust upon schools by a central authority and, therefore, it is possible that stakeholders may feel threatened by the change.

Huberman, as cited in Richardson (2001), commented that while satisfied teachers

were constantly involved in change and experimentation in their own classrooms, teachers' reaction to large-scale changes were either whimsical or hostile.

3.1.1 A Brief History of Educational Change

Fullan (1991) identified four phases in the evolution of the study and practice of planned educational change:

1. Adoption Phase (1960s);
2. Implementation Failure Phase (1970-77);
3. Implementation Success Phase (1978-82); and
4. Intensification vs. Restructuring Phase (1983-90).

The Adoption Phase was characterised by such innovations as New Maths, Open Education, MACOS and individualised instruction. Many of these changes were seen as being imposed using a top-down model and it was assumed that, if the innovation was adopted, then change was occurring.

Fullan's second phase highlighted that a number of innovations were failing as indicated by Bredo and Bredo (1975) and Goodlad and Klein (1970). Fullan suggested that, during this phase, change was only happening for change's sake and no one was questioning why innovations were failing. It was also during this phase that Fullan and Pomfret (1977) and Berman and McLaughlin (1976) started to explore the problems of educational change and what happened to innovations after their adoption.

During the Implementation Success Phase, Fullan (1991) argued that there were more examples of successful change. Research into teaching practice, leadership, staff development and effective schools revealed elements of success. Fullan (1982) proposed that there were three stages through which planned educational change passed to be successful: the adoption, implementation and institutionalisation stages.

The fourth phase of change, Intensification vs. Restructuring Phase, represented two different waves of thought. The intensification wave was characterised by such measures as an "increased definition of curriculum, mandated

text books, standardised tests tightly aligned to curriculum, specification of teaching, and administrative methods supported by evaluation and monitoring" (Fullan, 1991, p. 7). This allowed the governments to take a tighter control of the change process and to monitor what was going on in schools (Macdonald, 1991). The restructuring wave involved "school based management; enhanced roles for teachers in instruction and decision making; integration of multiple innovations; restructured timetables supporting collaborative work cultures; radical reorganisation of teacher education; new roles such as mentors, coaches and other teacher leadership arrangements; and developing shared mission and goals of the school" (Fullan, 1991, p. 9). This wave of reform was in contrast to the intensification wave, but the two concurrent waves, according to McBeath (1994), were a feature of education within Australia in the 1990s.

Miles (1964) suggested that it could take fifty years for a new practice to become widely established but according to MacDonald (1991), Governments want benefits to be measured in a relatively short time frame and most innovations are lucky to have five years to achieve their aims.

Much has been learnt over the decades about the implementation of planned change. Fullan (1992) suggested four main insights that have turned out to be very important in the success or not of innovations: (1) active initiation and participation, (2) pressure and support, (3) change in behaviour and beliefs, and (4) the overriding problem of ownership.

Fullan suggested that there is no evidence that widespread involvement at the initiation stage of a planned change is feasible or effective. He believed that it is difficult to determine how reform can begin when there are a large number of people involved. Initially, small groups of people may be involved in the change, and if successful, build momentum and lead to increased involvement.

For change to be successful, it requires elements of both pressure and support. However, Fullan stated that pressure without support may lead to resistance and alienation, and support without pressure may lead to a drift or waste

of resources. Richardson (2001) suggested that pressure is often seen as a negative element, but it can have a positive role in providing a catalyst for change.

Fullan noted that most people do not discover new understandings until they have delved into something and that changes in behaviour precede rather than follow changes in belief.

For real change to occur, Fullan argued that deep ownership is required; he suggested that a sense of ownership of something implies understanding what it is, skill in using or applying it and a commitment to it. However, he acknowledged that ownership is not easily acquired and is a progressive process. Huberman (1992) also reminded us to be cautious about the belief that participation in change will lead to ownership of that change and a clearer understanding of what the components of the change actually entail. He suggested that commitment would only come after the change had been mastered.

Huberman (1992) contended, therefore, that a study of change is incomplete without an analysis of the process of implementation of that change.

3.1.2 Developing a Process for the Implementation of Change Strategies

The introduction of the Leading Schools Program in 1997 was to be the catalyst for the development of a new culture within Education Queensland (McHugh, 1997). This new culture was to encompass the empowerment of people to use their highly developed professional skills to ensure improved student learning outcomes. It was also supposed to signal the end of bureaucratic decision making in schools and the introduction of a more collaborative approach.

However, many Queensland schools had already been moving along the continuum towards school-based management and had been doing so for quite some time. The Leading Schools Program, therefore, only formalised this transformation and was a declaration of a new culture in schools:

Organisational culture is the pattern of basic assumptions -
invented, discovered or developed by a group as it learns to cope
with its problems - that has worked well enough to be considered

valid and therefore to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, feel, think and act (Williams, 1997, p. 4).

At the school level, O'Donohue (1997a) suggested that it is necessary for all the stakeholders to attain the appropriate knowledge, attitudes, values and skills to take part effectively in school-based decision making to achieve better results. Williams (1997) argued that, to achieve such results, there is a need to construct a new reality. For schools, this may involve new ways of thinking, new ways of organising, new ways of teaching and new ways of learning. Therefore, it is implied that a transformation of organisational culture at the basic level may be required.

The extent to which a school community takes advantage of school-based management will depend greatly upon the quality of school leadership (Haddrell, 1997). Under school-based management, it is assumed that the leadership of the school principal will, therefore, be crucial. Wilkinson (1997) has referred to the principal as the gatekeeper in the change process and O'Donohue (1997a) has suggested that such a role may involve preparing people for change, ensuring appropriate structures and processes are in place, ensuring goals and values are in line with the needs of the proposed change, and ensuring that appropriate priorities are set and workloads manageable. The responsibility for managing the change process within schools will be an important responsibility of principals. O'Donohue (1997a) suggested that it is much easier to manage change when everyone in the school is enthusiastic about it, when there exists a common vision and agreed goals, and when there are congruent strategies to achieve goals.

When developing a policy framework in a changing system, principals may have to challenge basic notions about the nature of teaching and learning. This will include: the way schools operate, the way teachers teach and the way students learn. It is necessary to provide a framework for analysing the interrelationships with and among the interacting parts of a system.

Teachers, as a stakeholder group, will also play an important part in school-based management and the governance structures within schools. Leinward (1997) suggested a number of factors that inhibit change involve the role of teachers. He stated that teachers tend to be professionally isolated and are often caught up with the concerns within their classrooms and have insufficient time to worry about what is going on around them. Teachers may also have a fear of change and, related to this, a fear of failure. Change may be unsettling, difficult and even threatening and this may be increased if there is lack of support and insufficient time for the change to take place.

Atkin (1992) argued that teachers would take on practices that they find personally effective in terms of their beliefs and values. Teachers, therefore, may react differently to new practices and much will depend on the teacher's own beliefs about what is important. Sanders and McCutcheon (1986) also pointed out that teachers are unlikely even to try out a new practice unless it survives the conceptual test of comparing it to what else they know through a process of reflective thought. It, therefore, needs to survive a personal test for effectiveness. It is no good telling teachers that devolution of decision making is 'good' for them; it has to be proven that it is effective and beneficial to them and to the students.

When implementing change such as school-based management, Kaufman (1995) explored seven strategies for the principal to consider:

1. a vision;
2. goal setting and shared school goals;
3. transformation of school culture;
4. sharing the leadership;
5. empowering teachers;
6. fostering collegiality; and
7. involving the community.

Schools wishing to adopt the Enhanced Option 2 model of school-based management and the formation of a School Council may need to work their way

through such a change framework. Schools would need to be able to demonstrate that they are ready for the EO2 model of school-based management as it entails the greatest level of flexibility and local decision making. There is less direction and monitoring from both District Office and Central Office educational authorities.

Cavanagh (1995) suggested that schools that have successfully undergone restructuring and large-scale change have identified common elements. These include the notions of collaboration, shared visions, school-wide planning, collegiality, mutual empowerment, teachers being learners, efficacy and transformational leadership, all of which form a basis of Kaufman's framework for change.

Crowther (1997a) has also addressed the implementation of school-based management describing it as a four-phase process being undertaken over a period taking between 2 to 4 years. The four phases are:

1. structural foundation;
2. cohesive professional community;
3. infrastructural designs; and
4. authentic pedagogy.

It would seem, therefore, that the change process should be gradual and planned. Craven (1997) suggested that a minimum of 3 to 5 years is needed to build up the capabilities of a school to undertake self-management, stressing the importance for those involved in the decision-making process to undertake professional training and development. There is a need for clear guidelines on what to do and how to do it under self-management as well as sufficient time, commitment and energy for effective implementation.

Odden and Wohlstetter (1997) have also presented a number of strategies that can contribute to successful school-based management. These include dispersed power, whole-school professional development, principals who lead, dissemination of information, a defined vision and the reward for accomplishments.

Limerick, Cunnington and Crowther (2002) proposed that any change process requires a certain type of management cycle. This approach to strategic management is referred to as 'metastrategic management'. The metastrategic management cycle has four basic elements within it:

1. founding vision (possible and desirable future state of the organisation);
2. identity (overarching values and continuing vision);
3. configuration design (bringing together a desired strategy, structure and culture of the organisation); and
4. systems of actions (developing practical systems to meet the needs within the organisation).

The purpose of this approach is to involve the entire organisational community in a process of renewal by taking the best of the past into a new and shared future (Limerick et al., 2002).

The various change processes presented suggest similar steps that need to be followed. There is an emphasis on having a vision, empowering others and stressing the importance of communication. The principal's role in this process would appear to be extremely important.

3.1.3 Summary

A framework based on change theory, in particular, Fullan's practical theory of change and an institution's capacity for change, was considered suitable for guiding this study. The introduction of Councils has the potential to influence and change the operations of schools and the roles of all stakeholders. A range of issues has been identified within this change theory to help further guide the research: readiness for change, willingness to accept change, changing behaviours and beliefs, ownership of change, support and challenges for change, fear and rejection of change and change as a paradigm shift. These issues were used to provide an information base for this study and to assist in the development of a general framework for the data analysis and interpretation. The change framework embraces the importance of leadership, in particular, the role of the school principal

in effecting change. The importance of leadership theory as a guiding theoretical framework was considered to also be an integral base underpinning the research.

3.2 Leadership Theory

Gamage (1990) argued that leadership is an elusive and difficult construct to define and has been the subject of much academic investigation, scholarly discussion and workplace debate. He commented that over three hundred and fifty definitions have been produced in academic analyses of leadership.

It is impossible to review or analyse all these definitions of leadership, but it is interesting to distinguish the main similarities or commonalities within the large array of definitions. Crowther and Olsen (1997) noted that, although numerous definitions have been offered for educational leadership, there are usually two points of consensus. First, leadership is a group function requiring human interaction and second, it involves influence on the behaviour of others.

These common points are best exemplified within the definition of leadership provided by O'Donohue (1997b, p.4). O'Donohue defined leadership as a highly complex entity that moves people to concerted action in a mutually agreed direction and in a mutually agreed way. How agreement about the action, direction and process is arrived at provides evidence of the leadership style.

With the current move to school-based management, the question of leadership is again at the centre of educational discussions and debate.

3.2.1 A Brief History of Educational Leadership

The evolution of educational leadership as a field of study only began in the late 1940s and the early 1950s (Crowther, 1997b). Over the last forty to fifty years, the manner in which leadership has been envisaged and analysed has progressively changed.

1950s.

Up to the 1950s, there was an attempt to describe the traits, personality characteristics and behaviours which typify good leaders (Sharpe, 1995). Studies at

this time centred on attempting to identify and isolate specific traits that endow leaders with unique qualities and which differentiate them from their followers.

Silver (1983) argued that this type of research failed to reveal a set of characteristics consistently associated with effectiveness and was supplemented in the late 1950s by systematic analyses of the behaviour patterns of persons in positions of leadership.

1960s.

During the 1960s, there were many theories about two dimensions of leadership - the concern for people and the concern for task - and the idea of a characteristic leadership style emerged (Sharpe, 1995). The focus on leadership, according to O'Donohue (1997b), centred on the need for leaders to develop an appropriate balance between goal (task) orientations and people (social/welfare) orientations.

1970s.

In the 1970s, the idea of situation leadership surfaced with the study of flexible leadership styles (Sharpe, 1995). The concept of three-dimensional leadership acknowledged that success may be achieved in one situation, but not others. Similarly, O'Donohue (1997b) argued that effective leadership is situational and that there is no single leadership style that is effective in all situations; it is dependent on the knowledge and expertise of the people being lead. O'Donohue suggested that, during this period, studies of leadership centred on three main styles - democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire - with an expectation that leaders would tend more towards the democratic style of leadership.

At the end of the 1970s, transformational leadership came to prominence whereby leaders communicated a special vision for the future to their followers who are then, theoretically, lifted to higher levels of aspiration and performance (Sharpe, 1995).

1980s.

During the 1980s, leadership centred on management efficiency, performance management, performance indicators and measurable outcomes (Sharpe, 1995). It was argued that effective leadership focused on multi-skilling and multi-functioning with terms such as masculine and feminine styles of leadership evolving (O'Donohue, 1997b).

1990s.

The early 1990s saw a resurgence in interest in transformational leadership (Sharpe, 1995). Literature on leadership in the 1990s favoured collegial leadership styles which build people and effective teams, operate on consensus and centre on multi-skilling and multi-functioning teams (O'Donohue, 1997b). It was argued that many of the previous leadership styles and theories made sense, but they did not always work in practice. Crowther (1997b) believed that this was due to overlooking the human aspect of leadership.

3.2.2 Contemporary Constructions of Educational Leadership

Crowther and Limerick (1997) detailed five prominent leadership approaches that have acquired credibility in contemporary educational management theory and practice: Transformational Leadership, Strategic Leadership, Educative Leadership, Leadership as an Organisation-Wide Process and Empowered Professional Leadership.

Transformational Leadership.

Transformational leadership includes such concepts as 'empowerment', 'vision' and 'mission'. These terms are to be found in Education Queensland's strategic plans and within schools' annual planning documents. Transformational leadership involves transforming people involving visionary and emotional leadership; within this concept Avolio and Bass (1988) identified the elements of charisma, individual consideration and intellectual stimulation as important elements. Conceptualisations of the role of the school principal in the educational

reform movement of the past decade have tended to bestow the successful principal with transformation-like attributes and styles (Crowther & Limerick, 1997).

Fullan (1992) questioned whether transformational approaches to leadership that are based on top-down visions and values will have the effect of empowering and motivating educational practitioners or whether they will lead to a diminished sense of power and identity. The appropriateness of transformational leadership in relation to a school-based management focus based on shared leadership and a team approach could, therefore, be questioned.

Strategic Leadership.

Strategic leadership implies the creation of an overall sense of purpose that guides integrated direction formulation and implementation in organisations (Hosmer, cited in Shrivastava & Nachman, 1989).

Effective strategic planning, according to O'Donohue (1997b), is an element of effective leadership and incorporates four main components.

These are:

1. the establishment of Strategic Direction;
2. the concept of utilisation of Strategic Edge;
3. the establishment and amelioration of Strategic Need; and
4. the use of an effective Strategic Planning Cycle.

The role of the Director General of Education is a good example of a strategic leader within Education Queensland. The real purpose of the organisation is identified and espoused to the entire organisation through strategic documents. The school principal has to know how the school fits into the system and the external expectations and accountabilities placed on the school by Education Queensland. Sharpe (1995) suggested that these new expectations and accountabilities actually take attention away from the focus of teaching and learning.

Caldwell (1992) advocated that a leadership function that is predominantly strategic is the most appropriate approach for principals in self-managing schools:

... the principal must be able to develop and implement a cyclical process of goal-setting, need identification, priority setting, policy making, planning, budgeting, implementing and evaluating in a manner which provides for the appropriate involvement of staff and community, including parents and students as relevant. The complexity of the process in respect to the numbers of actors indicates a capacity to manage conflict (p. 16).

Corporate and organisational processes involved in strategic leadership may undoubtedly meet some of the needs of educational contexts, but research findings are emerging that present alienating effects on teachers (Rice & Schneider, 1994; Mulford, 1994) suggesting that these processes are not recognising the full range of educational needs.

Educative Leadership.

Crowther and Olsen (1997) stated that educative leadership is often linked to social reconstructionist philosophy. For Foster (1989), leadership is at its heart a critical practice involving educational leaders in the necessary practice of reflective and critical thinking about the culture of their organisations. This position emphasises the educative approach to leadership. Duignan and Macpherson (1992) and Grace (1995) claimed that responsible educational leadership is set in a context of 'cultural struggle' in relation to organisation politics and power relationships.

Crowther and Limerick (1997) suggested that theories of educative leadership take a stance on the issue of 'control' that is quite different from the stance implicit in other leadership theories where a hierarchical division of power is implied. Smyth (1989) described this definition of educative leadership as assisting people to understand themselves and their world in order to overcome the oppressive conditions that characterise work patterns and social relationships. This infers the importance of the work of principals and teachers in the school setting and further exploration of the concept of teacher leadership.

Leadership as an Organisation-Wide Process.

Ogawa and Bossert (1995) rejected the traditional view that the structure of schoolwork provided the most appropriate basis for conceptualising educational leadership. They argued that schools are more likely to develop meaningful purpose and sense of direction out of shared beliefs and values. Within the Leadership as an Organisation-Wide Process, leadership is seen as a distributed ideal with a family feeling and an empowerment approach. Pounder, Ogawa and Adams (1995) suggested that all members of schools - principals, teachers, staff members and parents - could lead and thus affect the performance of their schools. They have further stated that the total amount of leadership found within schools will have a positive relationship to their performance. Increasing leadership density within the school context will create the context for enhancing its effectiveness.

Crowther and Limerick (1997) posed a number of questions as to whether leadership as an organisational quality presumes a number of unresolved issues for schools in emerging postmodern settings in which diversity of meaning and identity is an underlying characteristic. These include:

1. does it presume prior values of democratic decision making that may be at odds with some prescribed requirements of educational workplaces?
2. does its implicit emphasis on processes provide sufficient recognition of the personal needs and goals of educators as individuals? and
3. does it reflect a singular view of reality, thereby limiting its capacity to meet the challenge of educational leadership in a postmodern world?

These questions are very relevant within the current move to greater shared decision making and school-based management.

Empowered Professional Leadership.

According to Crowther and Olsen (1997), educational leadership involving practising teachers and paraprofessionals as central figures has been a seriously underdeveloped topic. Berry and Ginsberg (1990) identified three components of

the role of a new cadre of professional educators in the United States whom they called 'lead teachers':

1. mentoring and coaching other teachers;
2. professional development and review of school practice; and
3. school-level decision making.

In Queensland, the roles of the Advanced Skills Teacher, and later the Senior Teacher, included recognition of the efforts of teachers both within the classroom and in relation to their contributions to the operations of the school within school-based management.

Lieberman, Saxl and Miles (1988) identified 18 skills that were manifested by teacher leaders and these were classified within six categories:

1. building trust and rapport;
2. organisational diagnosis;
3. dealing with the process;
4. using resources;
5. managing the work; and
6. building skill and confidence in others.

Crowther and Olsen (1997) defined teacher leadership as essentially an ethical stance that is based on views of both a better world and the power of teaching to shape meaning systems. It manifests itself in actions that involve the wider community and leads to the creation of new forms of understanding that will enhance the quality of life of the community in the long term.

Crowther and Olsen developed a framework for teachers as leaders that:

1. articulates clear views of a better world;
2. models trust and sincerity;
3. confronts structural barriers;
4. builds networks of support; and
5. nurtures a culture of success.

Research evidence suggests that, during the restructuring process towards school-based management, teachers have become more involved in the decision-making process (Chittenden, 1999). Sergiovanni (1987) emphasised the extent to which leadership roles are shared and the extent to which leadership density is enhanced. Hallinger, Murphy and Hausman (1992) argued that restructuring within the American system, during the late 1980s and early 1990s, had the greatest impact on teachers especially in their broadened responsibilities with respect to the decision-making process.

Chittenden (1999) advocated strongly that teachers are also leaders; teachers may be placed in a position to both influence and lead. School-based management should, therefore, provide that avenue to allow teachers to be school leaders. This position should be true for all stakeholders as they accept a greater level of responsibility.

Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson and Hann (2002) presented five premises that are a guide to a new professionalism for teachers:

1. premise one: teacher leadership exists - it is real;
2. premise two: teacher leadership is grounded in authoritative theory;
3. premise three: teacher leadership is distinctive;
4. premise four: teacher leadership is diverse; and
5. premise five: teacher leadership can be nurtured.

The interactivity of teacher leaders and administrative leaders has generated a concept that Andrews and Crowther (2002) have referred to it as "parallel leadership".

Parallel Leadership.

Crowther (2002) defined parallel leadership as:

... a process of teacher leaders and their principals engaging in collective actions to build capacity. It embodies mutualism, shared purpose and respect for individual expression and contribution (p. 169).

The principles underpinning parallel leadership may have implications for educational leadership and also contribute to processes of successful school reforms such as the implementation of School Councils. Lingard, Hayes, Mills and Christie (2003) supported the concept of parallel leadership and the notion that leadership goes beyond individuals and their traits and behaviours to a much more dispersed responsibility for tasks with multiple and varied forms of leadership. Such dispersed leadership is central to the organisation's capacity to deliver the best outcomes for all students.

3.2.3 Devolution of Decision Making: What are the Implications for Educational Leadership?

Beare (1989) maintained that, from the early 1980s, a fundamental shift has occurred in the way Australian schools and school systems have been managed. He listed three aspects of that shift: (1) the changing nature of the educational manager, (2) changes to the organisation they are managing, and (3) the changing way in which the process of education is being conceived.

The very role of principals in schools seems to be changing, from one of an educator to that of a manager. Beare argued that the managers of educational enterprises are now different from what we knew in the 1960s and early 1970s. There is a definite shift from 'educational administration' to 'efficient management'. This seems to be the view adopted by the Queensland Government as schools are receiving a significant allocation of resources to manage at the school level. Schools are becoming more and more economically driven with a great emphasis on efficient management. Examples of this can be found within the Leading Schools Program and the optional school-based management models whereby schools are being required to manage their teacher relief budgets and electricity and maintenance budgets. Schools are being held responsible and accountable for these resources and, to manage them efficiently. Schools are having to adopt approaches and strategies that appear to be successful in the business sector in a market

economy. More efficient management of resources, it is argued, will lead to greater savings and benefits to the school.

Education Queensland requires schools to produce Corporate Operational Plans linking priorities with their school budget; all expenditure has to be accounted for. Many of the terms being used in education today have been borrowed from the business sector. Like businesses, schools are being urged to promote their products and administrators are required to 'sell' their school's services. Principals, therefore, are being encouraged to develop entrepreneurial skills and promote the 'good' things produced in their schools.

Nadebaum (1991) stated that many principals believed that the emphasis on efficient management has been at the expense of education and that some principals have resented this. McCollow (1997a) argued that, due to the additional workload, principals could become less of a curriculum leader within their schools.

In contrast, O'Donohue (1997c) suggested the school principal, under school-based management, will have a more significant role as an educational leader within the school as a principal will have greater responsibility, autonomy and authority to improve educational service delivery to students. However, there will have to be wide consultation with other stakeholders such as parents and teachers. This greater autonomy will, therefore, have to be shared with the school community. It could be argued that it is the school community, more so than the school principal, that will experience the greatest role change as a result of school-based management.

O'Donohue (1996) argued that many schools in Queensland do not have a culture of community involvement and a deliberate strategy of informing and involving communities to proceed with successful school-based management. Many Queensland schools are still in the early stages of sharing power and leadership among employees.

He contended that school leadership will need to foster shared leadership, multi-skilling, cross-skilling and role sharing among subordinates. For school-

based management to be successful, it may be necessary to develop a culture of ownership among all stakeholders. The aim of school-based management should be to empower school staff by providing authority, flexibility and resources to solve the educational problems peculiar to their schools. This may depend very much on the leadership and management style of the school principal.

In recent years, the level of shared responsibility or extent of participation by the various stakeholders has been left in most schools entirely to the principal. Chapman (1988) found "the influence of the principal remains fundamentally important in determining the extent, nature and pattern of participation in schools" (p. 68). This has depended greatly on the leadership style of the school principal.

Not all principals will behave similarly, as they will have different assumptions about people and the factors that affect their interpersonal communication styles. "All managers operate within a particular philosophical framework that influences their thinking and decision making" (Hellriegel & Slocum, 1978, p. 307). The values held by a principal, therefore, will constitute an integral component of the decisions made.

When power becomes more equalised and decision making is shared amongst administrators, teachers and parents, some principals may find it difficult letting go of this responsibility and may oppose such a devolution process as it may contradict their leadership and managerial style. Peterson-del Mar (1994) stated that some principals will feel threatened by the power School Councils will have in the governance of a school. School principals will have to be prepared, and able, to assume multi-faceted roles, encompassing the facilitation of School Council operations, actively participating in Council policy making and managing the implementation of School Council priorities (Crowther, 1998).

The restructuring within Educational Queensland is making the school principalship more demanding than ever (Johnson, 1992). Principals may need professional development in preparation for their changing roles under school-based management. "To face their changing responsibilities as leaders of self

managing schools, principals urgently need new knowledge and skills" (Johnson, 1992, p. 10).

Although principals are now expected to operate in a collaborative relationship with staff, they also are to have final responsibility for making decisions. "The principal must accept final responsibility for decisions and be accountable for them" (Department of Education, 1990d, p. 5). Although School Councils have legislative responsibilities and, therefore, have become more accountable for their actions, the principal is still the Education Queensland accountable officer within the school. McCollow (1989) has raised a contradiction between the collaborative leadership style required under a democratic rationale and the supervising/hierarchical style required under a corporate management rationale. These supervision and collaborative processes can be quite conflicting. Switching from a supervisory role to a collaborative role may be difficult for both principals and teachers.

Hoy and Miskel (1982) stated that a challenge facing all administrators is to find methods to extend their influence over the professional staff beyond the narrow limits of formal positional authority. The problem will exist for principals to balance collaboration and supervisory duties. It will be difficult to discipline a teacher in one context and then expect to work collaboratively with that teacher in another setting.

Harrison (1987) listed a number of advantages of participation in decision making. These are:

1. improved decision making through collective judgement;
2. facilitation of change through broader acceptance of the choice;
3. closer identification of the participants with the organisation's objectives and goals;
4. higher levels of achievement and productivity; and
5. greater sense of participant satisfaction and self-fulfilment.

To achieve these benefits, it will be primarily the principal's role to involve stakeholders and to empower them (O'Donohue, 1997b). This may be difficult as the principal, teachers and parents may have different assumptions and perceptions about education and their respective roles. Many of the teachers and parents who are to be involved in school decision making may not be able to conceptualise the roles they need to play or are expected to play.

O'Donohue emphasised that devolution of decision making, if it is to be effective, should involve shared decision making, closer communication, dispersal of authority, collaboration and the empowerment of individuals. Structures such as program management and School Councils may help this happen where it involves teacher and parent representation. These should give all stakeholders a real say in decision making while respecting their professional judgement. Their involvement should be more than just at an operational level and include strategic and tactical decisions:

Despite opportunities for involvement, teachers will be reluctant to participate if they find they have little influence over the important decisions, which are made and implemented (Chapman, 1988, p. 71).

Where the principal has already made decisions, where decisions are only of a trivial nature or where stakeholders' decisions are not valued, the devolution process within a school may not be successful. Where a school principal still operates with an authoritarian leadership style when it comes to decision-making, this may only reduce teacher and parent professionalism, making them lose their initiative and involvement. Teachers and parents, therefore, will need to contribute to feel part of the system. "If one is to receive, one must also give" (Hanson, 1979a, p. 80).

According to Crowther et al., (2002) the role of the principal in successful school reform encompasses five functions:

1. visioning;

2. identity generation;
3. alignment of organisational elements;
4. distribution of power and leadership; and
5. external alliances and networking.

These five functions may assist principals to lead their schools under school based management and with the implementation of School Councils.

3.2.4 Summary

A framework, based on leadership theory, in particular, focusing on Crowther and Limerick's five contemporary constructions of educational leadership, was also considered suitable for guiding the study. Such a leadership framework supported the change framework based on Fullan's practical theory of change. As previously indicated, the principles underpinning the five identified leadership approaches have implications for educational leadership and also contribute, to varying degrees, to the successful change processes within schools. The introduction of School Councils has the potential to change the roles of all school stakeholders and to influence educational leadership within schools. The success of the introduction of school-based management and the implementation of School Councils may depend very much on the role played by the school principal. This includes how principals prepare for school-based management and how it is administered in schools.

A range of issues has been identified within this leadership theory to help further guide the research: the role of the principal, principal dominance, leadership styles, changing roles and working collegially. These issues were used to provide an information base for this study and to assist in the development of a general framework for the data analysis and interpretation. The change and leadership frameworks were viewed as being complementary and interconnected.

3.3 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the two general frameworks that guided this research. These were based on the concepts of change and leadership theory. These two theories were used to explore the introduction of School Councils and its impact within schools. Within these two theoretical frameworks, a number of more specific issues were identified to help analyse and interpret data from the study. It was acknowledged, however, that additional conceptual understandings might also emerge from the research.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter commences by recapping the aims of the study and the particular research method adopted. This is followed by a description of the instrumentation and data-analysis techniques as well as the data-collection procedures used in the main study. Information regarding the sample involved in the study is also provided. The chapter discusses issues of internal and external validity as well as limitations of the method employed in the study. Ethical issues in the data collection are discussed.

4.1 Research Aims

The main aims of the study are to determine the effectiveness of School Councils in their development and functioning as decision-making bodies within school-based management and to formulate theoretical understandings and criteria to assist with the development of effective Councils. From the literature review, the pilot study was designed to explore the following key focus areas: (1) What is the level of understanding by members of the School Council as to its role and responsibilities? (2) How successfully has the Council achieved its goals? and (3) How have the roles and relationships of members affected the operations of the Council?

As a result of the pilot study, the main study explored six key focus questions: (1) How is the profile of the Council developed? (2) What are the identified roles and responsibilities of School Councils? (3) How do the roles and relationships of Council members affect its operations? (4) What measures of accountability, monitoring and reporting should be involved in School Councils? (5) What training and professional development is required by Council members? and (6) How do Councils function and operate to maximise their effectiveness?

In exploring these focus questions, it is planned to also discover why things happen as they do within these schools so as to provide greater interpretative

answers to the focus questions and also to provide a better understanding of the theoretical understandings.

4.2 The Pilot Study

A pilot study was undertaken to explore the operations of a newly formed School Council in a large state primary school after its initial twelve months of operation. The pilot study was conducted over a six month period between January 1999 and June 1999. The main aim of the pilot study was to inform the main study, in particular to determine the appropriateness of the questions to be asked and the guiding theoretical frameworks. To assist in this, the pilot study explored the effectiveness of the School Council in its development and functioning as a decision-making body. Findings assisted with the formulation of commendations and recommendations, which were used as the initial basis in developing criteria to for improving School Council effectiveness. Such criteria were used as a basis for examining Councils in the main study.

In addition, the pilot study allowed the researcher to gain information on how the major study could be improved. Specific examples included:

1. incorporating document analysis as an additional data collection technique;
2. incorporating an additional stage to the study design by including a final questionnaire;
3. interviewing a teacher and parent member from each Council, in addition to the principal and chairperson;
4. being aware that some Council members, if employed by the school, might feel constrained in what they might say about the operations of the Council within the study - strategies in the major study need to be employed to alleviate this concern; and
5. being aware of the role of the researcher as a participant-observer at observed Council meetings and the difficulties that could arise.

The pilot study is presented in more detail in the following chapter.

4.3 The Main Study

The main study was undertaken over a twelve-month period from July 2000 through to June 2001 in three different state primary schools. This section provides information regarding the research method and the data-collection techniques used. The overriding methodology is best described as multi-site longitudinal qualitative case study research.

Qualitative or humanistic research, for the most part, is undertaken in natural settings. Researchers do not manipulate the environment, as in experimental research, although the researcher's presence can affect that environment. Qualitative researchers emphasise a holistic interpretation (Wiersma, 1991) and typically perceived facts and values as inextricably mixed.

A distinction within the humanistic research tradition can be made between qualitative and quantitative data. Hopkins (1980) described qualitative data as information in the form of statements or narrative as opposed to quantitative data that is expressed numerically. While the overriding method employed in this study is qualitative (Case Study), in terms used by Hopkins, the data are both qualitative and quantitative, a duality which is explained later.

A longitudinal study involves measuring the same individuals or groups two or more times during a period of time, usually of considerable length such as several months or years (Wiersma, 2000). This study is longitudinal in that it focuses on development over time for each of the School Councils.

4.3.1 Case Study Method

Wiersma (2000) described a case study as a detailed examination of something; a special event, an organisation, a subject, a system. Similarly, Sturman (1997) considered case study a generic term for the investigation of an individual, group or phenomenon.

As indicated, case study methods fall within the Humanistic Research Tradition. Humanistic research has certain qualities and commonalities. Moustakas (1994) identified these as:

1. recognising the value of qualitative designs and methodologies, studies of human experiences that are not attainable through quantitative approaches;
2. focusing on the wholeness of experiences rather than solely on its objects or parts;
3. searching for meanings and essences of experience rather than measurements and explanations;
4. obtaining descriptions of experience through first-person accounts in informal and formal conversations and interviews;
5. regarding the data of experience as imperative in understanding human behaviour and as evidence for scientific investigations;
6. formulating questions and problems that reflect the interest, involvement, and personal commitment of the researcher; and
7. viewing experience and behaviour as an integrated and inseparable relationship of subject and object and of parts and whole.

These qualities helped to provide direction to the researcher when deciding upon an appropriate research methodology.

Stenhouse (1985) referred to four styles of case study:

1. ethnographic case study, which involves single, in-depth study usually by means of participant observation and interview;
2. evaluative case study, which involves the evaluation of programs: quite often condensed fieldwork replaces the more lengthy ethnographic techniques;
3. educational case study, which is designed to enhance the understanding of educational action; and

4. action-research case study, which is designed to contribute towards the development of the case under study.

The type of case study used in this research can be best described as 'educational'. The research study aims to further the knowledge and understanding of the operation of School Councils in Queensland state primary schools. School Councils are relatively new decision-making bodies in Queensland schools and little research has been undertaken to study the effectiveness of their operations.

The decision to select a non-experimental research design such as case study was related to the nature of the research focus. The study investigated phenomena within specific research settings, where multiple sources of information were needed. Case study researchers believe that to understand a case, to explain why things happen as they do, and to generalise from a single example requires an in-depth investigation of the interdependencies of parts and of the patterns that emerge (Sturman, 1997). It is not the intention of the study just to describe the operations of the School Councils; it is expected that the research will explain why things happen as they do.

Qualitative inquiry methods have, however, been criticised on the basis of methodological rigour (Sandelowski, 1986). These concerns include a lack of rigour, little scope for generalisation, the length of time needed to complete the study, the large amount of unmanageable data and the difficulty in successfully completing the study.

Case study can be considered credible when undertaken with a rigorous and disciplined approach. An exemplary case study promotes significance, completeness, alternative perspectives, compelling evidence and a clear and engaging argument (USQ, 1998). Sturman (1997) highlighted a number of strategies that practitioners have suggested for achieving credibility in case study:

1. procedures for data collection should be explained;
2. data collected should be displayed and ready for re-analysis;
3. negative instances should be reported;

4. biases should be acknowledged;
5. fieldwork analyses need to be documented;
6. relationship between assertion and evidence should be clarified;
7. primary evidence should be distinguished from secondary, and description from interpretation;
8. diaries or logs should track what was actually done during the different stages of the study; and
9. methods should be devised to check the quality of data.

Good research practices use multiple techniques and data sources to enhance validity. The quality and appropriateness of the methodology within the study is enhanced because data are obtained through a number of different means (what is referred to as 'triangulation'). In this study, there is not a total reliance on information received through questionnaires; these data are clarified and supplemented through observations, supporting documentation and in-depth interviews. Moreover, the research methodology was trialed in the initial pilot study to provide greater validity. Any difficulties, which arose in the pilot study, were noted and adjusted within the main study.

Most qualitative research requires the need to establish trust between the researcher and the informants. At the same time, researchers commonly remain detached and 'neutral' in order to avoid biasing the data collected and losing objectivity. It is important that the researcher does not lead or dominate the dialogue and introduce the essential themes of the analysis. When a distinction is made between rapport and friendship in qualitative literature, the overwhelming tendency is to warn against friendships because of the hazards of sample bias and loss of objectivity (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 98). It is preferable that wherever possible a detached observer/participant exists, but it is accepted that not all qualitative research, particularly ethnographic research, can achieve this type of objectivity.

4.3.2 Selection and Description of Sites

At the time of the study, School Councils had been in place in Queensland for up to three years. For this research, it was necessary to identify three newly formed Councils. At the beginning of the 2000 school year, three state primary schools across the Gold Coast South and North Education Districts were identified as being in the process of forming their respective Council. The principal of each school was approached to be part of this research. Details of the research were provided to the School Councils concerned and all three were in favour of being included in the research.

The three state primary schools were selected on the basis of:

1. their position of implementing a newly formed School Council;
2. their geographic proximity to the researcher which allowed greater accessibility for meetings and interviews; and
3. their willingness to be involved in the research.

The three schools involved in the study vary in nature and size and, therefore, provide a reasonable variation perspective. The study took into account the differences between the schools and highlighted any possible links to the data obtained and analysed. Table 3 provides general information details about each of the schools involved in the research.

Table 3: School Details

	School A	School B	School C
Sector	Primary (P-7)	Primary (P-7)	Primary (P-7)
Enrolment	777	540	200
Principal	Female	Male	Male
Principal – length of time at school	4 years	5 years	15 years
Staff - Teaching	43	21	10
Staff – Non Teaching	20	16	7
Registered Parent Members (P and C)	18	12	16
Band (based on size of school/complexity)	9	8	7
Location: (Metropolitan/ Country)	Metropolitan	Metropolitan	Country

4.3.3 Selection and Description of Participants

The principals of the three schools were asked to provide school demographics and School Council composition details at the beginning of the research. The initial questionnaire (Appendix 1) was given to all Council members and follow-up interviews were undertaken with the school principal, Council chairperson and one staff and one teacher representative from each Council. The final questionnaire (Appendix 2) was provided to the chairpersons or school principals to be completed by the respective School Councils.

4.3.4 Data-Collection Techniques

This section provides information regarding the data-collection techniques used within the study. The techniques involved questionnaires, interviewing, observations and collection and analysis of supporting school and School Council documentation.

4.3.4.1 Questionnaires

The use of questionnaires allowed the researcher the most efficient way to gather data relevant to the study from all Council members.

Wiersma (2000) outlined a seven-step flowchart in conducting a questionnaire, which was followed by the researcher:

1. planning;
2. development and application of sampling plan;
3. construction of questionnaire;
4. data collection;
5. translation of data;
6. analysis; and
7. conclusions and reporting.

There are two general types of questionnaire items: (1) closed or selected form and (2) open-ended. The initial questionnaire comprised mainly open-ended items as it allowed respondents more freedom of response and allowed for greater information to be revealed. Respondents could elaborate on their feedback and

outline reasons for their responses. The final questionnaire consisted very much of closed items. This allowed for greater specificity and enabled responses to be tabulated in an easier manner.

Initial Questionnaire.

The initial questionnaire contained 49 questions all based on the six focus topics within the study. The questionnaire was designed to be well structured and detailed, but at the same time not too lengthy as to make it onerous for respondents. It was designed to take about 30 minutes to complete. A copy of the questionnaire is included as Appendix 1. A similar questionnaire (Appendix 6) had been used in the pilot study and this was useful in eliminating wording concerns and minimising researcher bias within questions. Information was required from the school principal and the School Council chairperson in relation to the school and its context. Although respondents were asked to provide general details about their Council, actual responses were anonymous and informants were ensured of this.

The initial questionnaire had an 80% response rate from School A and a 100% response from Schools B and C. Overall, this provided just over a 90% response from all respondents. One parent and one staff representative from School A failed to return their questionnaires. According to Wiersma (2000), generally 70% of a professional population is considered a minimum acceptable response rate.

As indicated, the pilot study was used to help develop the final form of the initial questionnaire. Items were tried out as a form of pretesting the questionnaire to discover any deficiencies that were not originally apparent. The pilot study presented the following benefits:

1. eliminating any ambiguities and clarifying directions;
2. avoiding results that provided little or no information;
3. identifying any misunderstandings, useless and inadequate questionnaire items;
4. overcoming mechanical difficulties relating to data tabulation; and

5. developing strategies to ensure greater questionnaire response rates.

The questionnaire results have been reported in two main forms: (1) in a descriptive manner, and (2) in tables.

Final Questionnaire.

The final questionnaire (see Appendix 2) was provided to the chairpersons or the school principals of the three Councils for each of the School Councils to complete together. It provided a proposed definition of an effective School Council and outlined identified criteria to assist them in being more effective. The criteria had been collated from the literature review, pilot study findings and as a result of the twelve-month longitudinal case study of the Councils. The final questionnaire focussed on the level of consensus on what would support Councils during their development phase of operation. All identified criteria were to be given a priority rating; 'high', 'medium' or 'low'. All three chairpersons or the respective school principals returned their completed questionnaires.

4.3.4.2 Interviewing

After the initial questionnaires were completed and the data collated, follow-up interviews were conducted with the school principal, School Council chairperson, one staff and one parent representative from each school. The purpose of the interviews was to clarify issues or to further explore responses and issues from the initial questionnaire. These interviews were school based and interview times were organised by the researcher and school principal from each of the schools. The interviews were designed to take about thirty minutes. They were not taped; notes were taken in order to create a somewhat less threatening atmosphere, but it is acknowledged that there lies the possibility of overlooking some information or the possibility of researcher bias in highlighting certain aspects above others. To overcome this, at the end of the interviews, the notes were made available to the respondents to peruse and to clarify any uncertainties. This was the only form of validation; written up interviews were not returned to the respondents for comment or signing.

The interviews undertaken would be best described as semi-structured with a combination of fairly specific and open-ended questions. Respondents were encouraged to talk freely and offer their thoughts and opinions. A number of key topics and themes were identified to cover within the interviews, but respondents were allowed to express their views and address issues most important to them. The interview schedule overview is attached as Appendix 3.

4.3.4.3 Observation of School Council Meetings

Another source of data was the observation of School Council meetings. The researcher observed a meeting at each of the schools. In this observation capacity, the researcher adopted the role of participant-observer. Participant observation is where the researcher takes on a participant role in the situation being observed. Wiersma (2000), after Wolcott (1988), distinguished different participant-observer styles: 'active' participant where the observer assumes the role of the participant; 'privileged' observer where the observer does not assume the role of a full participant, but has access to the relevant activity for the study; and 'limited' observer where opportunities for observation are restricted and other data-collection techniques take precedence.

The participant-observer attempts to generate the data from the perspective of the individuals being studied without interfering with the normal operations of the activity under study. Using Wolcott's categories, the approach in this study is best described as 'privileged' or even 'limited' although aspects of the 'active' observer emerged.

Observations of the meetings provided the opportunity to observe interactions, examine individual roles, determine School Council roles and priorities, study meeting operational issues and monitor stakeholder participation. It also allowed the researcher to cross check data gathered from questionnaires and interviews. The observation schedule overview is attached as Appendix 4.

Difficulty in distinguishing the observer and participant roles can often arise in participant-observation. The researcher had become aware of this concern during

the pilot study and let it be known from the outset of each School Council meeting that the role of the researcher was as a 'privileged' observer and not as a full or 'active' participant. Comments were provided where requested, but these were kept to a minimum. The researcher was aware not to lead discussions so as to minimise potential interference.

Because the meetings were not taped, the validity of the researcher's notes again come into question. At the end of each meeting, the notes taken by the researcher were shared with the principal for verification.

Only one meeting at each school was observed; it is acknowledged that this meeting may not have been typical of all Council meetings.

4.3.4.4 Documentation

The collection and analysis of supporting documentation is an important research technique to complement questionnaire, interview and observation techniques. Exelby (1992) believed the analysis of supporting documentation provides a written dimension to the data collected. In this study, it provides a more complete picture of the operations of each of the School Councils.

Each school provided documentation relevant to their respective Council. This included:

1. meeting agendas;
2. minutes of various meetings;
3. Council constitutions;
4. school profiles;
5. newsletters containing relevant information;
6. School Annual Reports; and
7. Council handbooks.

The use of documentary evidence to support other data-gathering sources was very important. The researcher was only able to observe one Council meeting and the perusal of agendas and minutes allowed the researcher to gain a greater

understanding of how the Councils operated throughout the entire twelve months. The document analysis schedule overview is attached as Appendix 5.

4.4 Data-Collection Procedures

The data-collection process consisted of five distinct stages over a twelve-month timeframe (see Table 4).

Table 4: Summary of Data-Collection Phases

Phase	Time Period	Key Activities
Stage One	July to September 2000	Questionnaires to all School Council members
Stage Two	October 2000	Interviews with various School Council members
Stage Three	October 2000 to April 2001	Observation of School Council meetings
Stage Four	May 2001	Collection of relevant School Council documentation
Stage Five	June 2001	Final questionnaire for each School Council

4.4.1 Stage One

Stage One involved the administration of the initial questionnaire. The questionnaire was provided to all Council members and each was given four weeks to complete it. The case study was originally planned to commence in January 2000, but was delayed till July 2000. This was due to the Queensland Teachers Union implementing a work ban directing teachers not to attend school meetings in out-of-school hours. This work ban affected the meeting of two of the three School Councils. The initial questionnaire was provided to the Councils at different times to ensure that each had met for a second time. In effect, therefore, the questionnaires were distributed between July and September 2000.

4.4.2 Stage Two

Stage Two involved conducting interviews with the school principal, School Council chairperson, one staff and one parent representative from each school. Interviews were organised through the respective school principals and times were arranged for the researcher to visit the schools and conduct the interviews. The

principals were asked to organise the staff and parent representatives to be interviewed depending on their availability at each of the schools.

4.4.3 Stage Three

During Stage Three, the researcher visited a formal School Council meeting at each of the schools. School A held its meetings in the afternoon commencing straight after school, School B held its meetings in the evening away from school and usually in the neighbouring town centre, and School C also held its meetings in the evening, but at the school. Each Council was asked to provide suitable dates for the researcher to visit a meeting and each school principal discussed this with his or her Council. The visits to the various meetings were conducted over a six-month period. As it happened, both Schools B and C had to reorganise the originally planned meeting dates due to circumstances that arose at their schools.

4.4.4 Stage Four

Stage Four involved the collection and analysis of supporting documentation. At all three schools, the researcher was able to access meeting agendas, minutes, Annual Operational Plans and School Annual Reports. School C was also able to provide a school profile, newsletters containing relevant information about its Council, a Council handbook and Council Constitution.

The researcher organised informal visits to each of the schools to collect the relevant documentation. Discussions were held with the three school principals regarding the types of documentation required and their relevance for the operations of the Council. The researcher was allowed to keep copies of all the documentation supplied.

4.4.5 Stage Five

Stage Five involved the administration of the final questionnaire. This questionnaire was designed for each of the School Councils to complete during a Council meeting. The questionnaire was provided to each Council chairperson or principal to present to Councils. It was necessary for the researcher to note the date of the next meeting to give sufficient time for the questionnaire to be included in

the respective agendas. The researcher then liaised with the chairperson or principal for the return of all completed questionnaires.

4.5 Issues of Validity and Reliability

Wiersma (2000) highlighted the need for all research, regardless of method to possess validity and reliability. He provided the following definitions of the different forms of validity and reliability:

1. Internal Validity: the basic minimum control, measurement, analysis and procedures necessary to make the results interpretable;
2. External Validity: the extent and appropriateness of the generalisability of results;
3. Internal Reliability: the extent of consistency in the methods, conditions and results of research; and
4. External Reliability: the extent to which research is replicable.

The issues of validity and reliability are extremely important, but qualitative research has been strongly challenged over the years as being deficient in these areas (Sturman, 1997). However, the work of such scholars as Goetz and LeCompte (1982) have assisted in defending qualitative research and alerted critics to methods of enhancing validity and reliability in this type of research.

Similarly, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 300) have identified an alternative set of criteria that correspond to the terms typically employed to judge the quality of quantitative and qualitative work (see Table 5).

Table 5: Comparison of Criteria for Judging the Quality of Quantitative versus

Qualitative Research	
Conventional terms:	Naturalistic terms:
Internal validity	Credibility
External validity	Transferability
Reliability	Dependability
Objectivity	Confirmability

The question of internal validity in a qualitative study is crucial. The research study needs to express in the clearest terms how observations were confirmed and crosschecked. It is important to identify what aspects of triangulation are employed in the research. The researcher has to be aware of the issue of alternate interpretations of the data and if any efforts have been made to disconfirm conclusions.

The internal validity of this study has been addressed by applying principles of triangulation.

Good research practice obligates the researcher to triangulate, that is, to use multiple methods, data sources, and researchers to enhance the validity of research findings (Mathison, 1988, p. 13).

Cohen and Manion (1994) outlined three methods of triangulation, which are relevant to this study:

1. time triangulation;
2. space triangulation; and
3. methodological triangulation.

Because the case study was conducted over a lengthy period of time (twelve months) the researcher was able to account for changes in perception and understanding and minimise the danger of basing conclusions on short term and one-off data. The internal validity of the study was also improved by using multiple data-collection techniques and multiple informants. In the study, four main data-collection techniques were employed and all stakeholder groups within each of the Councils were interviewed and observed.

By using three case study sites, the researcher was able to enhance the external validity of the study. A multi-site case study increases the likelihood that the findings would be applicable to other sites.

Wiersma (2000) described reliability simply as meaning consistency, that is, the consistency of the research in measuring whatever is measured. Reliability is, therefore, concerned with the data collection and analysis phase of the research

study. The strength of a case study's reliability depends on how appropriately the observations and analysis represent the data obtained from the study. Reliability is very much promoted when adhering to acceptable case study research protocol as outlined by Sturman (1997). The greater the reliability the greater is the extent to which the study can be replicated with consistent methods, conditions and results. Reliability is a necessary characteristic for validity.

4.5.1 Controls for Threats to Internal Validity

Internal validity of research involves securing adequate control over extraneous variables, selection procedures and measurement procedures to make the results interpretable (Wiersma, 2000).

To minimise the threat to internal validity within the case study, the researcher implemented a number of strategies. By using multiple data-collection techniques such as questionnaires, personal follow-up interviews, document analysis and observations, the internal validity of the study can be improved. The weakness of any one data-collection technique can be compensated by the strengths of the other techniques. Triangulation of data-collection techniques is an adopted strategy for enhancing the validity of the research findings. It is a strategy that will help to eliminate bias by providing supporting data from a number of different techniques.

The initial questionnaire was trialed with a staff and parent representative from the researcher's own School Council. This allowed for some rearrangement of questionnaire items in order to make them both clearer and more relevant. The initial questionnaire was also modified according to feedback from respondents within the pilot study.

4.5.2 Controls for Threats to External Validity

External validity concerns the populations to which the researcher expects to generalise the results (Wiersma, 2000). The external reliability of the study has been enhanced by a number of techniques affirmed by Goetz and LeCompte (1982). These include:

1. care being taken to design the study and conduct the study to sensitively deal with the respondents;
2. careful attention being given to data collection and data analysis;
3. identifying the researcher's relationship with those involved in the study; and
4. care being taken to ensure all key stakeholder groups are represented within the study.

It might be questioned whether the findings from this study on the operations of three newly formed School Councils could be applicable to other Queensland state schools. It is possible that conclusions may be a reflection of the uniqueness of the schools involved in the study.

As indicated by Gibson, Allen and Sturman (2003), there are some who have argued that because of the uniqueness of case study methods or ethnographic methods, the capacity to generalise from the results of these types of research is not present. However, this is contentious. Dising (1972) argued that science deals with uniqueness and regularities: if the primary focus is on regularities, the unique shows up, and if the primary focus is on the particulars, regularities show up. Stake (1980, p. 69) also advocated a process of naturalistic generalisations which appears more suitable for qualitative methods; such generalisations are arrived at "from the tacit knowledge of how things are, why they are, how people feel about them, and how these things are likely to be, later on or in other places with which this person is familiar".

Gibson, Allen and Sturman (2003) summarised that naturalistic generalisation is arrived at by recognising the similarities of the objects and issues in different contexts and 'sensing the covariance of happenings'. For naturalistic generalisation to be possible it is essential to ensure that the salient features of a case or issue are documented so that a new situation can be illuminated by a very thorough understanding of a known case or issue. This is so whether it is the

researcher attempting the generalisation or practitioners using the description and applying it to their own setting.

Similarly, as cited by Wiersma (2000, p. 262), Polkinghorne (1991) makes a very useful distinction between two types of generalisations:

1. aggregate-type - generalisations limited to statements about the population considered as an entirety; and
2. general-type - generalisations in which assertions are made that something is true for each and every member of a population.

Gibson, Allen and Sturman (2000) suggested that quantitative research uses the aggregate-type generalisation while qualitative research uses general-type generalisation. The latter type of generalisation is based on what is called assertoric argumentation (Polkinghorne, 1983). Such argumentation is based on the reasonableness of its claim given that its assumptions and evidence are acceptable. Assertoric argumentation accepts a full range of rationality. Generalisation may be based on the logic of similarity or dissimilarity in which something is understood as more or less like a prototype, and the logic of narrative relationships of events to a plot in which the meaning of an event is understood by its relationship to a designated outcome (Polkinghorne, 1991, p. 7).

4.6 Data Analysis Procedures

The task of data analysis in qualitative research is quite complex. The data record of a qualitative research study can be quite extensive and, because of this, qualitative data analysis requires organisation of information and data reduction. As Wiersma (1991) explained:

Data analysis in qualitative research is a process of categorisation, description, and synthesis. Data reduction is necessary for the description and interpretation of the phenomenon under study (p. 85).

Wiersma (2000, pp. 202-203) argued, data analysis in qualitative research begins soon after data collection begins, because the researcher checks on working hypotheses, unanticipated results, and the like. Data collection and data analysis usually run together; less data are collected and more analysis is produced as the research progresses. There is considerable overlap of these steps in practice.

Wiersma also explained, qualitative data analysis requires organisation of information and data reduction. The data may suggest categories for characterising information. Comparisons can be made with initial theories or working hypotheses. Early data collection might suggest an hypothesis or theory, and then more data might be collected to support, disconfirm, or extend the hypothesis or theory. Initial descriptions of causes and consequences may be developed. Possible internal and external checks are made. All in all, analysis in qualitative research is a process of successive approximations toward an accurate description and interpretation of the phenomenon. The report of the research is descriptive in nature and contains little technical language. The emphasis is on describing the phenomenon in its context and, on that basis, interpreting the data.

Qualitative research often produces large quantities of descriptive information from field notes or interviews. Such information needs to be organised, and through this organisation there should be data reduction. This process is called coding (Gibson, Allen and Sturman, 2003).

Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1984) provided an outline of three concurrent activities, which the researcher must undertake after the data have been collected:

1. data reduction;
2. data display; and
3. conclusion drawing/verification.

One concern that has been expressed about case study methodology is the subjective nature of data analysis (Sturman, 1997). Advocates of qualitative research have often been accused of a lack of scientific rigour at this stage of the

research process (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Although the researcher has taken considerable trouble to enhance the validity and reliability of the research through triangulation of data collection techniques and data sources, the final analysis of the data may still be open for question about the defensibility of findings and outcomes.

The study involved data collection through questionnaires, follow-up interviews, document analysis and observations of Council meetings. The majority of information was gathered through the initial and final questionnaires and they comprised both closed and open-ended questions. These data were collated so that all responses were recorded and frequency of responses noted. The data were then collated into various tables to provide for better presentation and interpretation. Quite a deal of time was spent analysing the data to look for patterns and categories to assist with the formulation of emerging issues, to relate data to the theoretical underpinnings of the study and to be able to justify conclusions. The data gathered from the participant interviews, document analysis and the observations of the School Council meetings were used to support or refute the questionnaire data and subsequent conclusions.

In this study, the transcripts of interviews with participants, observation notes from School Council meetings and field notes of associated documentation were all carefully analysed. The identified research topics were used to guide the collection and analysis of the data. All data collected were categorised under these key research topics. A series of large retrieval charts were developed to assist in simultaneously reducing and displaying the data. This allowed for comparisons between the three School Councils and also between key stakeholder groups within the research topics. The data were examined in order to identify patterns and explanations and interpreted against the explanatory categories within the identified frameworks of change and leadership theories. As Miles and Huberman (1984) proposed, the process of data analysis in qualitative research, is a continuous and interactive enterprise.

4.7 Limitations of the Methodology

Despite comments made about the capacity to generalise from case study research, it is important to be cautious. In selecting the three schools to be involved in the longitudinal case study, it is possible that, because the School Councils were newly formed and in their initial year of operation, members would be highly enthused and motivated in undertaking their various roles and would be highly optimistic about their Councils. Alternatively, because of the newness of the Councils, there may be more teething problems that adversely affect attitudes. It is possible that a different picture might have emerged had the Councils been in operation for some time.

Within the longitudinal study, initial questionnaires were given to all members of the three Councils. Although all questionnaires were returned from Schools B and C, two questionnaires were not returned from School A. Both a parent and staff representative did not return their questionnaires even after reminders from the researcher. Although it was disappointing that there was not a 100% return on the questionnaires from all three Councils, there was still a balanced representation of all key stakeholders from each Council within the study.

Follow-up interviews were undertaken with the school principals, the chairpersons and one parent and staff representative from each of the three Councils to clarify issues and responses. It may have been more beneficial to interview all members and not restrict this to the chairpersons and principals and only two other representatives. This decision was made because of time constraints.

The researcher observed only one Council meeting in each of the three schools. The observation of more meetings may have provided a more reliable source of data. It could be argued that the meeting observed might not have been typical. However, agendas and minutes of other meetings were analysed to give the researcher a comparison with the observed one. This revealed a consistency between the observed meetings and previous meetings of each of the Councils.

Video recordings and tape recordings were not used when observing Council meetings or conducting interviews with various members. The researcher made detailed notes and the accuracy of these was always confirmed with the participants. All members of the Councils were in favour of this type of record taking and commented that they would feel uneasy if they knew video or tape recordings were being used.

One researcher conducted all the research and this may have restricted the scope of data gathering. Despite this, it allowed for increased internal consistency of data collection and analysis.

4.8 Ethical Issues in Data Collection

Sturman (1997) stated that there is a responsibility on case study researchers, as with all researchers, to address in a responsible way ethical issues that emerge in their work. The researcher, therefore, has an obligation to respect the rights, needs, values and desires of the respondents. Information provided through the questionnaires, as well as that obtained through observation and in-depth interviews, can invade the life of the informants and sensitive information can frequently be revealed. Although individual responses could not be identified, being such a small sample group, differences in opinions and beliefs about the operations of the Council can be revealed. Honesty in answers may provide some uneasiness within the group. Sensitivity needs to be used in how this information is presented.

The following safeguards were employed to protect the rights of the informants:

1. the research objectives were clearly articulated both verbally and in the written form;
2. permission was obtained to undertake the study;
3. the informants were clear about the different techniques of data collection;

4. a copy of the final report was to be made available to the respondents;
5. the respondents' rights, interests and wishes were to be considered first when choices were made regarding reporting data; and
6. informant and school anonymity were to be maintained.

4.9 Summary

This chapter has outlined the research design that was adopted for this study including the rationale for placing the study within the qualitative research paradigm. Justification for adopting a longitudinal multi-site case study was presented. Details of the schools and respondents have been outlined as well as the data-collection techniques used. Issues related to validity, reliability and ethics in data collection have been addressed. A description of the data-analysis process employed has also been provided. The following chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the pilot study and its importance to the overall study.

CHAPTER 5: PILOT STUDY

Wiersma (1991) described a pilot study as a study conducted prior to the major research study that in some way is a small-scale model of the major study, conducted for the purpose of gaining additional information by which the major study can be improved.

A pilot study was undertaken as a single-site case study of the operations of a School Council in a large state primary school after its first year of operation. The Council had been in operation for just twelve months. The study focused on its operations and analysed how it had been implemented to provide a detailed description of experiences during the developmental stage.

5.1 Purpose of Study

The pilot study aimed to provide commendations and recommendations for future action that would assist in the compilation of criteria for developing an effective School Council; such criteria could then be examined more thoroughly in the second phase of the research study. To achieve this stated aim, three focus questions were framed to guide the pilot study:

1. What is the level of understanding by members of the School Council as to its role and responsibilities?
2. How successfully has the Council achieved its goals? and
3. How have the roles and relationships of members affected its operations?

In formulating these questions, the researcher was informed by both the historical and sociopolitical context of Queensland Education and the research on the implementation of School Councils within school-based management from both within Australia and abroad. These questions were, therefore, focused around the rationale espoused by Education Queensland concerning the role and functions of Councils.

The focus questions were designed to cover the following areas with respect to School Councils:

1. their roles and responsibilities;
2. their possible future roles;
3. their achievements and effectiveness;
4. their accountability;
5. their composition and mode of operation;
6. the influence of the principal;
7. means to improve their operations; and
8. the school's readiness for school-based management.

While the study has the potential to assist the pilot study school to enhance its understanding of its role and functioning and to be aware of the perspective of the various stakeholders within the Council, its prime purpose was to assist in planning for Phase 2 of the research study.

5.2 Research Questions

The three focus questions on which this pilot was based are outlined below with identified supporting literature as to their importance and relevance to the study.

Focus Question 1.

The first focus question sought information on the level of understanding by members of the School Council as to its role and responsibilities.

The functions of School Councils in Queensland are strategic in nature as outlined in the Act by the Education and Other Legislation Amendment Act 1997 (Education Queensland, 1997c) and, therefore, are not concerned with the day-to-day operations of the school. It is possible that some confusion may lie in the distinction of the terms strategic and operational. The meaning of each needs to be clear for all Council members. Advising the principal about strategic matters, monitoring the implementation of school plans and policies and having the power

to approve budgets and strategic documents may be interpreted differently. This focus question explored the understanding of Council members as to what comprised strategic and operational issues within their role.

Once Councils have determined their roles and responsibilities it may prove beneficial for them to regularly review their operations in relation to these identified roles and responsibilities. This may help to identify if what they perceive as their key roles and responsibilities is what is actually being undertaken. It will also allow for the identification of successes or possible areas for improvement. This focus question, therefore, helped to identify any review processes that were used within the Council for this purpose.

Focus Question 2.

The second focus question asked how successfully the School Council had achieved its goals.

The main intent of Councils in Queensland, as presented by Education Queensland (1997b), is to improve student learning outcomes through the cooperative effort of all school stakeholders. As Kaufman (1995) described, in effecting change in an educational setting there initially needs to be a vision and goal setting and shared school goals. To achieve improved student learning outcomes, therefore, requires a clear direction and sense of purpose for the school. School needs and priorities should be determined so that all members are focused on achieving the same goals. It is part of the School Council's role as identified in the rationale provided for them (Education Queensland, 1997b) to determine the best use of resources to develop a safe, supportive and productive learning environment.

Responses to this focus question will help determine whether the Council has achieved its goals. Crowther and Olsen (1997) highlighted the importance of nurturing a culture of success. Strategies that are employed to do this were targeted. This focus question addresses whether any successes are shared or communicated to the whole school community. As Councils now have greater

legislative responsibilities, they have become more accountable for their actions. The level of accountability within the Council and the understanding of this by Council members are also explored within this focus question.

Focus Question 3.

The third question asked how the roles and relationships of members have affected the operations of the School Council.

Within this focus question, the following aspects are covered: (1) composition of the School Council, (2) operational procedures employed, (3) training and professional development undertaken, and (4) role of the school principal and various Council members.

Recommendations from the major review of School Councils, entitled *Building Trust - a Proposal For School Development Councils* (Education Queensland, 1997a), outlined the importance of equal representation from parents and school staff. The Report also highlighted the need for democratic decision-making practices. The representation and operational procedures of the Council are examined within this focus question.

Many of the school stakeholders – principal, teachers and parents - may be undertaking different roles from which they are traditionally accustomed. All Council members are now expected to be involved in the decision-making process as equal partners. This issue will also be explored within this focus area.

Because of these changed roles, it may be necessary for stakeholders to be involved in additional training and professional development in the area of shared leadership and governance. In support of this, Caldwell and Spinks (1988) argued the need for parent and staff development in making school self-management more successful. The level of training and inservice will be investigated as well as the importance placed on this.

It has been argued in the theoretical chapter that the role of the school principal will be critical to the effectiveness of the School Council. For example, Chapman (1988) found that the role of the principal determines to a large degree

the extent, nature and pattern of participation in schools. The principal, therefore, has to be prepared to share leadership and power with Council members. The role of the principal and the level of shared decision making are examined within this focus question.

In their recent Council workshops (Griffith University, 2001), Griffith University highlighted the importance of the functioning and general operations of Councils. These workshops focused on how Councils can function smoothly and effectively by having clearly defined procedures and protocols for their day-to-day operations. This included strategies for handling conflict and catering for democratic processes within decision making. These aspects of Council operations are examined within this focus area.

5.3 Methodology

5.3.1 Method and Techniques

The pilot study was undertaken over a six-month period from January through to June 1999. This section provides information regarding the research method and the data-collection techniques used in the pilot study, which included a questionnaire, interviews and participant observation.

5.3.2 Case Study Method

A single case study approach was used to undertake the pilot study. The case study method has already been described in detail in the major research methodology section of the study within Chapter Four.

5.4 Instrumentation Description

5.4.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was the main form of data collection. The questionnaire comprised both closed and open-ended items. There were 26 items, all based on the three focus questions within the study. The questionnaire was designed to take about 20 minutes to complete. A copy of the questionnaire is included as Appendix

6. Additional information was required from the school principal and the Council chairperson in relation to the school and its context.

5.4.2 Interviews

After the questionnaires were completed and the data collated, follow-up interviews were conducted with the school principal and Council chairperson to clarify or to further explain responses and issues.

5.4.3 Observation of School Council Meeting

The observation of a Council meeting provided an opportunity to observe the way it operated. The meeting provided an opportunity to observe interactions between the participants, observe roles, listen to contributions made by participants and list the types of business undertaken. It also allowed the researcher to crosscheck perceptions that were developed from the questionnaire and follow-up interview data. Notes were taken throughout the Council meeting.

As already stated, a difficulty that can arise in participant observation is to separate the observer and participant role. Because of the relationship that had been established between the researcher and the Council members, the researcher was often called upon to comment upon issues or offer advice and information. It is essential that the role of the researcher as an observer is made clear to the participants at the beginning of the meeting. Comments were provided where asked, but the researcher was conscious not to lead discussions and keen to minimise potential interference.

5.5 The Population and Sample

All members of the School Council were given a questionnaire to complete. In total this comprised eight members. However, only six members completed the questionnaire in the time allocated despite a number of reminders. One staff and one parent representative failed to complete the questionnaire. The respondents included the principal, the Parents and Citizens Association's president and the School Council chairperson.

5.6 Description of the School

A description of the school and details of the School Council members are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Description of School (Pilot Study)

Type of school	Primary
Band of school (Determined by size and complexity of school)	9
Total number of students	892
Total number of teachers based at school	47
Total number of non-teaching staff	20
Number of registered Parents and Citizens Association members	50
Location of school (Metropolitan/Country)	Metropolitan

5.6.1 Brief Description of School Community and Level of Community Involvement and Support within the School

The school principal provided a brief description of the school community, which comprises a mix of local, interstate and overseas families. There has been a rapid increase in the school's population over the last few years due to the availability of new housing in the area. The school is relatively new, being opened in 1993 and there is a very high level of support both within the classroom and within the sporting and fundraising programs. Before the Council was established, both staff and parent involvement existed in various ways. These included: the Parents and Citizens Association, the school's management committee, working parties, management groups and year-level meetings.

5.6.2 Composition of the School Council

The School Council consisted of eight members: the principal, the Parents and Citizens Association president, two teacher representatives, one non-teaching representative and three parent representatives. It had made a decision not to have any community representatives or student representatives at this stage, but this decision was to be reviewed in the future or as needs changed. A recent vacancy

had occurred and only one parent nomination was received. The Council meets about once per term, but in its initial year more regular meetings were held.

5.6.3 General Information on the School Council and its Formation

The School Council had been in place for just on twelve months. The original reason for its formation was that it was a formal requirement of the Leading Schools Program. Under the school-based management options, the school community decided to adopt the Enhanced Option 2 Model and therefore continue with its School Council.

5.6.4 Information on School Council Members

Table 7 provides information on the individual School Council members as collated from the questionnaires. The majority are female, but there is an even spread of ages represented on the Council. Being only in place for just twelve months, all members had limited experience with Councils although two of the members had previous experience when they lived interstate. The length of time that members had been at their current school varied with a combination of new staff and parents as well as those who had been at the school when it was opened six years ago. The reasons for the involvement of members in the Council varied; the highest response was that the members believed that they had skills or experience to offer.

Table 7: Information on School Council Members (Pilot Study)

Age Spread		Length of time involved at present school	
21-30	1 respondent	1 year	1 respondent
31-40	2 respondents	4 years	2 respondents
41-50	2 respondents	5 years	1 respondent
Over 50	1 respondent	6 years	2 respondents
Average length of time: 4.3 years			
Gender		Length of time on School Council	
Male	2 respondents	1 year or less	6 respondents
Female	4 respondents		
Reasons for becoming involved in the School Council (some members gave more than one response)			

Previous experience on School Councils	2 respondents
To offer skills and expertise	2 respondents
To have a greater say on change	1 respondent
Personal benefit	1 respondent
P and C member for a number of years	1 respondent
Importance of teacher representation	1 respondent
Leading School requirement	1 respondent
Belief in importance of School Councils	1 respondent

5.7 Data Collection Procedures

The data-collection process consisted of three distinct phases (see Table 8). Phase one, described as the Initiation Phase, was conducted during the month of February 1999. During this phase, the pilot study proposal was formulated, the literature compilation undertaken and the initial contact made with the school to be involved in the study.

It should be noted that the researcher spent four weeks in February and March 1999 relieving as Acting Principal in the school selected for the study. This provided a background and a greater understanding of the operations of the school.

Phase two, described as the Preparatory Phase, was conducted in March and April 1999. Phase two consisted of the development of the questionnaire instrument to be used in the study. Issues raised in the literature compilation helped inform the design of the questions. The questionnaire used a combination of closed and open-ended items.

Phase three, described as the Investigative Phase, was conducted in May 1999. The questionnaire was administered, with School Council members given two weeks to complete it. Data were collated from the questionnaires returned and follow-up discussions held with the school principal and the Council chairperson. Follow-up discussions were held with the principal to gain further staff explanations of questionnaire data and with the School Council chairperson to obtain a parent perspective on questionnaire data. A Council meeting was attended to record observations of the operations of the meeting and to collect information to enhance that gained from the questionnaire and interviews.

Concurrent with these three phases, additional data were collected through school visits and informal discussions with Council members, including the principal, staff and parents.

Table 8: Summary of Data-Collection Phases (Pilot Study)

Phase	Time Period	Key Activities	Concurrent Activities
1. Initiation Phase	February 1999	Pilot study proposal Literature compilation Initial contact with school	Informal data collection School visits Discussions with principal, staff and parents
2. Preparatory Phase	March/April 1999	Questionnaire development Questionnaire trialing	
3. Investigative Phase	May 1999	Questionnaire administration Follow-up interviews School Council observation	

5.8 Data Analysis Procedures

The study involved data collected through questionnaire, interviews and observation. The majority of information was collected through the questionnaire, which comprised both closed and open-ended items. These data were collated such that all responses were recorded and the frequency of responses noted. They were then collated into various tables and lists to provide for better presentation and interpretation. The information was analysed to look for patterns to assist with the formulation of emerging issues and to be able to justify conclusions. The information gathered from the follow-up interviews and the observations of the School Council meeting were used to support or refute that gained from the questionnaire and to inform subsequent conclusions.

5.9 Discussion of Results

The discussion presented in this section is structured around the three focus study questions. Areas of commonality and difference will be highlighted.

5.9.1 The Level of Understanding of the Role and Responsibilities of the School Council

Each of the Council members was asked to list the Council's main role and responsibilities and the future directions. The responses provided are listed below:

Main Role of the School Council.

1. to provide a combination of advisory and decision making roles to complement the administration;
2. to provide strategic planning and oversight of activities run in the school by the Parents and Citizens Association;
3. to provide a balance across the school - to be accountable to all areas of the school community, but not to take over the many efficient operations and communication channels of the school;
4. to approve, document and monitor such undertakings as the Annual Operational Plan and Budget and to take an active role in making the school community aware of the important happenings within the Council; and
5. to coordinate all school bodies and have them aiming to create a better school.

Main Responsibilities of the School Council.

1. to approve the main school documents (e.g. Annual Report, Behaviour Management Policies, Budgets, etc.);
2. to monitor school policies; and
3. to undertake decision-making responsibilities and to approve changes and procedures.

Responses varied considerably with little commonality. As stated in legislation, School Councils in Queensland are to be concerned with strategic and long-term decisions and not operational everyday issues. Some responses indicated that operational issues are still part of the Council's role. It was also noted at the observed meeting that a combination of strategic and operational issues was

discussed. Both the principal and chairperson explained that it was very difficult to distinguish between strategic and operational issues as they quite often overlap. The Council has never made a formal distinction between the two types of responsibilities and these have not been fully discussed by members. Two respondents indicated that they were not aware of the main Council responsibilities; these had never been formally discussed at a meeting and the Council had never formulated a list of set responsibilities.

Future Directions for School Councils.

Members were asked to comment on the future directions of the Council and any additional expansion of its role. Information from the questionnaire, supported by individual comments, showed that members were still coming to grips with the current level of operation and trying to understand their current role rather than considering what future directions might evolve. All members, however, agreed that School Councils would be an important part of schools' operations in the future. Table 9 outlines the various responses on the future of the Council, but developing the school's profile and public image was seen as important and the principal and chairperson endorsed this.

Table 9: Future Role and Responsibilities of the School Council (Pilot Study)

Questions	Responses and Comments
Do you feel the roles and responsibilities of the School Council could be increased?	Not at this stage Government is rationalising more and more responsibilities to schools The School Council should not become an over powerful body Will depend on what the School Council is supposed to achieve
What do you believe is the future of School Councils?	An excellent future As strong as the beliefs of the people involved Following the Victorian model Become ingrained as part of the decision-making process in every school wishing greater autonomy Will depend on the success within the school communities Will be part of the future role of schools

5.9.2 The Success of the School Council in Achieving its Goals

Focus Question Two examined the factors that help to determine whether the School Council has been successful in achieving its goals. Its main achievements are examined as well as whether its operations have made a difference to the functioning of the school, in particular, the influence on learning outcomes and how the school's performance is monitored. Another aspect of this research question is the level of accountability of the School Council and how it is perceived by the school's community.

Main Achievements of the School Council.

The list of achievements covered a number of different forms:

1. undertaking a telephone parent satisfaction survey - (3 respondents);
2. deciding on the format of the School Annual Report - (3 respondents);
3. approving the Annual Operational Plan - (2 respondents);
4. clarifying school values and beliefs - (2 respondents);
5. providing an avenue for open and frank discussions by all parties on important school matters - (3 respondents); and
6. being a democratic decision-making body - (2 respondents).

The main achievements to date have been centred on the development and approval of the School's Annual Report. This document entails reporting on the school's progress during 1998 against both departmental and school goals. The Council had quite a deal of input into this document and this also involved a clarification of the school's value and belief statements. Another area of achievement was the data-gathering process to help inform the Council on the direction of the school's operations.

Effectiveness of the School Council.

Opinion on how effective the School Council has been in achieving its goals varied considerably. The average response was slightly 'above satisfactory'. Almost fifty percent of the respondents were undecided or considered that the Council had not made a difference to the school's operations or had not helped to improve

student learning outcomes. Parent representatives marked their responses lower than staff representatives. Responses to this question revealed that some members believed that there were not clear identified goals for the Council to achieve, but no other significant barriers were identified that would stop it achieving its goals.

Approximately half the members believed that the Council had made a difference to the school's operations and that its achievements had improved student learning outcomes. The following comments were made as evidence that it had made a difference to the school's operations:

1. there had been a sharing of the Annual Report;
2. there was greater direction through the strategic planning;
3. there had been a difference, but it was very difficult to substantiate the actual difference made;
4. the Council provided a stable outlet to all areas of the school community; and
5. there appeared to be a sharing of the workload with not all of it left to the administration.

Overall, it was thought that the Council had not been running long enough for subsequent differences to be ascertained.

Accountability of the School Council.

The questionnaire feedback showed that all Council members were very happy with the strategies used for collecting data from the staff, parents and general school community. These strategies included:

1. parent survey - (6 respondents);
2. through the principal - (2 respondents);
3. open forums - (2 respondents);
4. Parents and Citizens Association meetings and staff meetings - (3 respondents); and
5. direct contact and discussions - (2 respondents).

All members could also list the various strategies - through newsletters, Parents and Citizens Association reports, staff meetings, team meetings, school magazine and word of mouth - which were used sometimes to report back to the various stakeholders. There was a 100% positive feedback to these specific issues. However, when asked how accountable the Council was to the school community, the responses were quite varied. The average response was slightly 'above satisfactory'. Only half the respondents believed that there was a process for the School Council to monitor the school's performance and that it had a direct role in this process. Processes proposed for monitoring the school's performance included:

1. parent survey;
2. through the School Annual Report;
3. through the Annual Operational Plan; and
4. through reports from various committees.

The manner by which the School Council is to be involved in monitoring the school's performance had not been officially determined.

How the School Council is Viewed within the School Community.

There was quite a deal of uncertainty as to how the operations of the Council were viewed by the various stakeholder groups within the school community. Most responses were personal feelings or resulted from individual discussions with some members of the stakeholder groups. Responses included the Council being seen as: an approving body; a forum for concerns; and a place where the stakeholder groups had representation. Some believed that there was little interest in its activities or that school staff, parents and the general school community were unaware of what it actually did. Follow-up discussions with the principal and chairperson highlighted the fact that there were no formal processes for feedback to the various stakeholder groups about the operations of the Council.

5.9.3 The Effect on the Operations of the School Council of the Roles and Relationships of School Council Members

Focus Question Three examined how the roles and relationships of the Council members could influence its operations. Such factors as the occurrence of conflict situations and the reaching of consensus were covered and the roles of various members were examined to ascertain whether all believed that they were equal members of the Council. The time commitment to the School Council's operations and the support given to members in preparing them for their respective roles were also examined.

Decision-Making Processes and Conflict Within the School Council.

The Council has an established process for reaching consensus in decision making and all members employed this method during the observed meeting. None of the members referred to any real conflict or difficult decisions that occurred during its first twelve months of operation - differences in opinions were overcome through discussions and the use of a set voting process. The only difficulty arose with the creation of a vacancy when the newly elected Parents and Citizens Association President was already a Council member. Only one parent nomination was received for this position and the person was duly elected. There was some confusion as to the process for filling the vacancy as this had never been experienced before.

Roles of School Council Members.

Despite the provision of structures and processes to enhance teacher and parent involvement, the study revealed that the principal was still viewed by the large majority of members as the most important influence on the operations of the Council. Reasons stated for this included: (a) the principal was the main provider of information, (b) the notion that the 'buck' stopped with the principal, (c) the principal was the most informed, respected and trusted, and (d) the principal set the agenda. These reasons were confirmed during the observation of the Council meeting. Some respondents also identified the chairperson as an important source

of agenda items. The principal stated that all members had an equal voice and no one person had a greater influence over the Council operations. When agenda items were discussed, all members were encouraged to contribute equally. However, because the principal was the most informed and was also seen as the accountable officer, the principal was still viewed as the most influential person. A comment made as a follow-up to the question, “Who is the most influential person on the School Council?” revealed a very interesting perception by one member. It was noted that, because the majority of the members were employed in some capacity at the school itself, members were actually restricted in voicing ‘dissenting comments’ about agenda items. Upon investigation, it was revealed that six out of the eight members were employed at the school. However, the principal and chairperson did not believe that this had an effect on the decisions made and the general operation of the School Council. The researcher had to be aware that some Council members might feel constrained in what they might say about operations of the Council within the study. The importance of responses being confidential and anonymous was highlighted to all Council members to help overcome this possible concern. This issue was noted in case it arose in the main study.

Support or Training to Prepare for School Council Role.

A number of members identified some form of support or training for their respective roles on the Council. The responses included:

1. previous experience - (1 respondent);
2. Education Queensland and QCPCA documents - (1 respondent);
3. School Council training - (3 respondents);
4. role clarification by the School Council - (2 respondents); and
5. combined meeting with another school on the use of the School Council manual - (1 respondent).

The responses were varied and very inconsistent. Education Queensland provided initial training for the principal, one staff and one parent representative. The school itself had endeavoured to examine its role by combining with another

school to explore the School Council manual. However, not all members were involved in this process. Not all had been involved in training for their respective roles and there had not been any structured ongoing support. On the other hand, such ongoing support had not formally been identified as an issue or area of need.

5.10 Discussions, Conclusions and Recommendations

The aim of the pilot study had been to investigate the operations and effectiveness of a School Council after its first year of operation in order to help inform the focus questions for the main longitudinal study. Three focus areas derived from the literature review informed the pilot study: (1) the level of understanding by members of the School Council as to its role and responsibilities, (2) the success of the Council in achieving its goals, and (3) how the roles and relationships of members affected the operations of the Council.

5.10.1 The Level of Understanding of the Role and Responsibilities of the School Council

There would appear to exist an optimistic future for the School Council in the operations of the school. This was supported by the positive responses expressed by members representing all stakeholder groups. However, the pilot study would suggest that a greater common understanding of the role and responsibilities of the Council needs to be developed by all its members as well as within the school community.

5.10.2 The Success of the School Council in Achieving its Goals

Sufficient anecdotal evidence was presented by members to demonstrate that the School Council had started to have a positive influence on a number of aspects of the effectiveness of the school's operations. However, the pilot suggested that processes be implemented to identify and measure positive effects so as to demonstrate to the school community the benefits resulting from its operations. This might also help to develop the overall profile of the Council in the community. The pilot study also indicated that not all members had an

understanding of the accountabilities involved in the operations of the School Council.

5.10.3 The Effect on the Operations of the School Council of the Roles and Relationships of School Council Members

Successful strategies were in place to cater for conflict situations and general operational issues that allowed for smoothly run Council meetings. However, the pilot suggested that there needed to be greater shared leadership within the Council as the principal was seen as the dominant person. The study also indicated the need for increased training and support for Council members.

5.11 Implications of the Study

The conclusions from the pilot study contributed to the formulation of criteria that might assist School Councils in being more effective in their operations. These criteria were grouped under the following focus areas that were investigated in more detail within each of three schools in the longitudinal study:

1. promoting the profile of the Council within the school community;
2. developing well-defined roles, responsibilities and functions of the Council;
3. developing roles and relationships of Council members;
4. promoting accountability, monitoring and reporting responsibilities;
5. providing training and professional development for all members; and
6. improving the functioning and operations of the Council.

CHAPTER 6: CASE STUDY REPORTS

This chapter outlines in a descriptive way the operations of each of the three School Councils in the main study. Because of the nature and manageable number of responses to the open-ended questions within the initial questionnaire, responses could be listed in discussion. Responses to the final questionnaire, however, are presented in table format in the following chapter. The discussion presented in this chapter seeks to provide answers to the six identified key focus questions. The case study reports provide an overall picture of the three Councils being investigated.

The first focus question asked, "How is the profile of the School Council developed within the school community?" Identified key areas within this focus question included: (1) the school's readiness for a Council; (2) how it is viewed by parents, staff and the general school community; and (3) how its profile is promoted.

The second focus question asked, "What are the identified roles and responsibilities of the School Council?" This focus question explored the following identified key areas: (1) the defined role of the Council; (2) school community awareness of this role; (3) defined responsibilities; (4) school community awareness of responsibilities; (5) access to relevant documentation; and (6) anticipated achievements after twelve months of operations.

The third focus question asked, "How do the roles and relationships of School Council members affect the operations of the School Council?" The following themes were explored within this focus area: (1) understanding of individual roles; (2) various roles of members; (3) role of the principal; (4) role of the chairperson; (5) role of staff and parent representatives; (6) shared leadership; (7) time commitment; (8) positive relationships; and (9) teamwork.

The fourth focus question asked, "What measures of accountability, monitoring and reporting should be involved in School Councils?" Within this focus question the following areas were examined: (1) improving student learning outcomes; (2) monitoring school performance; (3) accountability of the School

Council; (4) gathering issues from and reporting back to stakeholders; (5) measuring achievements; (6) effectiveness in achieving goals; and (7) making a difference.

The fifth focus question asked, "What training and professional development is required by School Council members?" This focus question explored the following areas: (1) preparedness for roles; (2) training and support; and (3) identified additional training and support.

The final focus question asked, "How do School Councils function and operate to maximise effectiveness?" This focus question covered the following areas: (1) operational procedures; (2) regularity of meetings; (3) setting agendas; (4) democratic decision making; (5) arriving at consensus; (6) minute keeping; (7) handling conflict; (8) identified barriers; (9) School Council and school management structure; (10) relationship of Council to other decision-making bodies; (11) review processes; and (12) School Council future.

6.1 Description of School Community: School A

School A comprised a broad range of socio-economic groupings and was situated in the middle of the Gold Coast. It serviced a group of transient students as well as students from housing commission areas. The student population was also culturally diverse. There had been a decline in the school's population over the last few years due to the aging population and lack of development in the area.

The school was well established with many strong school values. The school staff was very stable with many teachers having taught at the school for many years. There was a high level of parent support in the classroom, and within the sporting and fundraising programs, but only a small band of dedicated parents within the P and C Association. Before the School Council was established, both staff and parent involvement existed in various ways. These included membership of the P and C Association, staff meetings, parent involvement in class and school

activities and opinion surveys. The Council currently meets once a term in the school's staffroom.

In School A, it had been decided to form a fairly large School Council with ten members in total. The composition did not include any student representation or invited community members. However, a Student Council was in operation at the school. The composition of the School Council was: principal, P and C president, three teacher representatives, one non-teaching representative and four parent representatives. As one staff representative and one parent representative did not return their questionnaires, general details on each of these members were not available for collation. Table 10 outlines the information gathered from the Council members of School A.

All but one Council member were in the age group of 41 years and over. Half of the members had been at the school for six years or more, with only one member being at the school for less than two years. Two of the Council members were male. The reasons for being on the School Council varied. Three members wished to offer their skills and expertise and make a contribution to the future of the school while a further two members expressed interest in school-based management. Two of the members had been asked by the principal to be on the Council. Another two members, the principal and P and C president, noted that it was a School Council requirement that they be represented on the Council. Only one of the members had any previous experience with School Councils and this was when the member lived interstate.

Table 10: Information on School Council Members: School A

Information on School Council Members	
Age Spread:	School A
31-40 years	1
41-50 years	5
Over 50 years	2
Length of Service at Present School:	
1 year	1
3 years	1
4 years	2
6-10 years	3

11 or more years	1
Gender:	
Male	2
Female	6
Reasons for Being Involved in Council:	
To offer skills and expertise	2
To make a contribution to the future of the school	1
Automatic member as P and C President	1
Leading School/EO2 requirement	1
Asked to be on School Council	2
Interested in education and school-based management	2
Previous school Council Involvement:	
Yes	1
No	7

6.2 Case Study Report: School A

6.2.1 Promoting the Profile of the School Council within the School Community

School Readiness for a School Council.

On the initial questionnaire, the chairperson rated the school community 'highly' ready for a School Council. However, all other members did not share this belief. They rated the school community's readiness as 'low' to 'average', commenting on the lack of parent involvement in and awareness of the role of the Council. Even the chairperson, when interviewed, acknowledged that some members of the school community, including Council members, did not fully understand its role (Interview Schedule A2).

How the School Council is viewed by Parents, Staff and the General School Community.

The general consensus of members was that there was a 'low' level of awareness of the Council. Most comments included "no real interest", "parents are not aware", "there is no communication with the parent body", "uncertainty" and "general apathy" (Initial Questionnaire). Only the chairperson believed that the Council was viewed positively by the parents (Initial Questionnaire).

The members also indicated that there was only minimal positive support for the Council (Initial Questionnaire). The interviewed staff member commented that some of the school staff felt somewhat threatened by it. This was explained because most staff had little understanding of its role and there was very little

feedback to staff on its operations (Interview Schedule A3). One parent member believed that the Council had "no teeth" and, therefore, teachers were not truly supportive of it (Interview Schedule A4).

On the initial questionnaire, members stated that there was no real interest in the Council from the general school community either because of disinterest or because community members were unaware of its existence.

How is the School Council Profile Promoted?

The initial questionnaire highlighted that very few strategies were cited for promoting the School Council. The only avenue identified was through the school newsletter, but this was not a regular occurrence. Little evidence of this was cited by the researcher (Document Analysis Schedule A). The majority of members stated that the Council was not being promoted positively to members within the school community (Initial Questionnaire).

6.2.2 Roles and Responsibilities of the School Council

Defined Role of School Council.

From the initial questionnaire, only two members, the chairperson and the principal, were confident in defining the role of the Council. The majority of members were uncertain of that role. While most were able to identify its strategic role, they were unsure as to what this actually involved.

At the observed meeting, one agenda item raised by a staff member was the supply of foam boxes for all the classes to keep children's lunches cool during summer. This was an example of the Council dealing with day-to-day operational issues. There was also some confusion identified at the observed meeting as to the respective roles of the Council and the Local Consultative Committee. It was clarified at the meeting that the Local Consultative Committee dealt with new operations within the school that affect members of the various unions within the school workplace (Observation Schedule A).

The school principal made the following comment about how she perceived the role of Council:

The role and scope of the School Council is so limited. It has no teeth to truly influence the school. It needs to have more power than just to guide the direction of the school. I see it as a token gesture by Education Queensland and not a true step to school-based management (Interview Schedule A1).

School Community Awareness of Role.

Not one of the members stated on the initial questionnaire that the school community would be aware of the actual role of the Council. The principal commented that this stemmed from a lack of communication between the various stakeholders and the School Council (Interview Schedule A1).

Defined Responsibilities.

The majority of members was not able to list the various responsibilities of the Council; they stated that they were unclear about what these responsibilities were (Initial Questionnaire). The parent member interviewed, commented that responsibilities had never been made clear to members (Interview Schedule A4). The main focus activity, according to the principal, had been developing the school's charter for the next three years, but the Council had also been involved in the technology plan for the school (Interview Schedule A1).

School Community Awareness of Responsibilities.

Because of the uncertainty of Council responsibilities by its members, it was expected that there would be little understanding of these responsibilities by the general school community. This was the belief held by all the Council members (Initial Questionnaire). As one of the teacher representatives stated, "if the School Council members can not clearly list the School Council responsibilities then there will be little chance that the school community will have any idea of the School Council responsibilities" (Interview Schedule A3).

Access to Relevant Documents.

On the initial questionnaire, the majority of Council members were not able to list any documents to which they actually had access. This was especially the

case for the parent members. Two staff members were, however, able to list appropriate documentation that they were able to access. At a follow-up interview, one teacher stated that he did not have the necessary documentation to be well informed when making decisions. He further explained that no members had been provided with copies of relevant documentation that may have assisted with their roles and responsibilities and with the operations of the Council (Interview Schedule A3).

Anticipated Achievements after Twelve Months of Operations.

There was little commonality in the goals that the School Council wished to achieve after twelve months of operation as evidenced on the initial questionnaire. The list included: determining the school's charter, developing strategic plans, determining school rules, setting performance targets and forming a school mission statement. Three members did not list any achievements they wished the Council to achieve. As one parent member explained, it was still unclear where the Council was heading and what it would achieve (Interview Schedule A4).

6.2.3 The Roles and Relationships of School Council Members

Understanding of Individual Roles.

When responding to the initial questionnaire, most members were uncertain of their respective individual roles on the Council. Only the chairperson rated as 'high' her understanding of her role and could list clearly what was involved. Staff and parent representatives stated generally on the questionnaire that their role was to represent the various stakeholder groups when making decisions. Other than this representation, no other details of individual roles were provided.

Various Roles of School Council Members.

Half the School Council members stated that there were specific roles determined, while the other half believed that these did not exist (Initial Questionnaire). As one teacher representative explained, the chairperson was elected, but no other formal positions were decided. Members volunteered to take

minutes at different meetings and meetings were scheduled when decided by the school principal (Interview Schedule A3).

Role of Principal.

On the initial questionnaire, members listed the following roles of the school principal in relation to the Council:

1. to manage and develop team performance;
2. to work closely with the Council chairperson;
3. to keep members on task;
4. to have an equal role as other members; and
5. to determine the direction of the school.

However, at the observed meeting, the school principal led the majority of discussions and was the main provider of information (Observation Schedule A).

Role of Chairperson.

On the initial questionnaire, members believed that the chairperson should work very closely with the principal and guide and encourage other Council members. During the observed meeting, a number of members were not involved in discussions and not encouraged to contribute to decisions. Although the chairperson would introduce agenda items, the principal, not the chairperson, led the majority of discussions (Observation Schedule A).

Role of Staff and Parent Representatives.

Staff and parent representatives on the Council expressed on the initial questionnaire that they were aware of their role of representing and liaising with various stakeholder groups. However, there was no formalised process identified for undertaking these roles. One staff member, when interviewed, emphasised that this representation should accurately reflect opinions of the whole staff and not of minority groups or individuals (Interview Schedule A3).

Shared Leadership.

On the initial questionnaire, half of the members stated that there should be shared leadership within the School Council. The other half was undecided,

indicating that meetings might become vague in direction with fewer decisions being made. When interviewed, the principal suggested that there seemed to be a lack of understanding of what constituted shared leadership (Interview Schedule A1). Those members who supported shared leadership indicated on the initial questionnaire that it was necessary to overcome the dominance of meetings by the principal or chairperson.

Suggestions to develop shared leadership involved rotating roles and responsibilities within the Council and, therefore, increasing the level of communication (Initial Questionnaire). One parent member recommended that each member should have a specific area of responsibility that could contribute to the agenda (Interview Schedule A4). This strategy was suggested because the parent believed that some members were not being involved and included in decisions and operations.

Time Commitment.

The School Council met about once per term with meetings going for about one hour. Both the staff and parent members interviewed stated that they were prepared to meet more often and for longer periods if required (Interview Schedules A3 and A4). The principal indicated that an additional meeting could be called, if needed, especially when school strategic documents had to be forwarded to District Office. However, the principal stated she was very keen to keep meetings to a one-hour duration (Interview Schedule A1). On the initial questionnaire, both parent and staff members identified the need to attend various parent and staff meetings each month other than the School Council meetings.

Positive Relationships.

On the initial questionnaire, all members indicated that they were in favour of developing positive relationships within their Council. The need to cooperate and have positive relationships was seen by all members as essential for the Council to function effectively. Members identified the following ways to help such relationships: open communication, greater accountability, cooperation, more

encouragement, valuing others' ideas and their input and not being judgemental (Initial Questionnaire). The chairperson believed that the School Council was an effective avenue for liaising between teachers and parents (Interview Schedule A2).

One teacher representative suggested that there should be younger members on the Council to balance the higher number of older members (Interview Schedule A3).

Teamwork.

Teamwork was seen by all members as necessary for improving Council's performance (Initial Questionnaire). This was in contrast to the response on shared leadership where a number of members were undecided. When interviewed, the school principal stated that, for a team to be effective, it was essential that all members pulled in the same direction and, therefore, it was also essential that the Council had agreed visions and goals. She further commented that teamwork would allow greater use of members' skills and expertise (Interview Schedule A1).

As one teaching member explained, instead of everyone focussing on the one issue, several issues could be dealt with at the same time with different team members taking on various leadership responsibilities. This teacher suggested that, to allow teamwork to be fostered, would require leadership from the principal (Interview Schedule A3).

6.2.4 Accountability, Monitoring and Reporting

Improving Student Learning Outcomes.

Half the members stated on the initial questionnaire that they believed the operations of the Council could improve student learning outcomes. The other half was undecided. The reasons given for the expectation of improved student learning outcomes were based on:

1. effective long term planning;
2. parent involvement; and
3. identification of school community needs.

One teacher summarised how she believed the School Council would improve student learning outcomes.

By focussing strategically on children's needs, resources can be deployed more effectively, benchmarks established and outcomes monitored, analysed and improved upon (Initial Questionnaire).

Monitoring of School Performance.

The school principal stated that the School Council did not have a process for monitoring the school's performance (Initial Questionnaire). At the follow-up interview, she explained that a formal process was still to be developed and would be a future priority (Interview Schedule A1). From the initial questionnaire, all other members indicated that they were unsure whether a process existed. The parent representatives commented that nothing related to this matter had been explained to them (Initial Questionnaire). Monitoring of the school's performance was not currently a function of the Council. Staff representatives did express that they were aware of the statewide testing and opinion surveys.

Accountability of the School Council.

Responses on the initial questionnaire concerning the level of accountability of the Council varied considerably. Some believed it should be extremely accountable, while others were not prepared to commit it to being accountable for its operations. When interviewed, one parent member stated that, if the School Council was truly reflective of the views of the staff and parents, then it would be reasonable to expect it to be accountable for its actions (Interview Schedule A4). However, a teacher representative believed the Council should only be accountable for managing resources to meet the children's needs for optimum learning and not for the end result of a child's development (Interview Schedule A3).

Gathering Issues From and Reporting Back to Stakeholders.

As identified from the initial questionnaire, no formal processes were in place for gathering and reporting issues from and to staff, parents and the school community. The principal explained that she had undertaken a number of strategies

with various groups to analyse draft proposals and documents (Interview Schedule A1).

On the initial questionnaire, suggestions for gathering and reporting issues had been provided by each of the Council members. Staff suggested that the best method would be by providing minutes of meetings through staff representatives at staff meetings. Parent representatives could do the same at P and C meetings. Other methods for gathering issues from parents included a parent suggestion box and parent surveys. Suggestions for gathering and reporting issues within the school community included phone polls and community flyers.

Measuring School Council Achievements.

The school principal stated that no formal processes had been developed to measure Council achievements. All other members also acknowledged this (Initial Questionnaire).

Effectiveness in Achieving Goals.

The responses on the initial questionnaire as to whether the School Council would be effective in achieving its goals varied considerably. Some members were very positive, while others believed it might be quite ineffective. At a follow-up interview, one teacher representative commented that the effectiveness of the Council would depend on the leadership of the principal and the rest of the administration team (Interview Schedule A3).

Making a Difference.

The majority of members on the initial questionnaire believed that the operations of the School Council could make a difference to the operations of the school. The principal, on the questionnaire, indicated that it would take quite some time for this difference to be seen.

The interviewed teacher representative commented that it would make a difference only if the principal was secure enough to allow the Council to be effective. This teacher believed the principal needed to allow the Council to grow, otherwise its effectiveness would be stifled (Interview Schedule A3).

The parent representative interviewed stated that the school would continue to achieve effective outcomes whether the Council was effective or not (Interview Schedule A4).

6.2.5 Training and Professional Development

Preparedness for School Council Role.

From the initial questionnaire, two members - the chairperson and school principal - were confident that they were prepared for their role on the Council. All other members stated that they were not confident in being ready for their role, mainly due to a lack of training or because their role was not clearly defined.

Training and Support.

The initial questionnaire found that the school principal, chairperson and one of the teacher representatives had undertaken a formal workshop on School Councils. This was an Education Queensland organised workshop for school teams that occurred in 1999. All other members had received no formal training. The only identified support received by some of the members was that given to them by the school principal in the form of encouragement.

The principal indicated that she was unsure whom to access to provide further training and support for Council members (Interview Schedule A1).

Identified Additional Training and Support.

On the initial questionnaire, all School Council members indicated that they needed some form of additional training and support. The following were identified as suggestions for consideration:

Training

1. greater working knowledge of Council legislation;
2. inservice on roles and functions of Councils; and
3. developing skills needed for effective participation.

Support

1. how to develop greater working relationships with school staff;
2. team building;

3. more knowledge about the real purpose of the Council;
4. networking with members from other Councils;
5. sharing experiences with other Councils;
6. experienced facilitator to assist in the development of the Council;
7. a guide to assist Councils in their early stages; and
8. applying successful models from other Councils.

6.2.6 Functioning and Operations of the School Council

Operational Procedures.

Members expressed on the initial questionnaire that they were generally unsure of the operational procedures of the Council. The chairperson suggested that these would develop with time and that currently operational procedures were not documented for members (Interview Schedule A2).

Regular Meetings.

School Council meetings were held once per term and all members confirmed this on the initial questionnaire. However, when interviewed the teaching member explained that the meetings were not scheduled beforehand and no set date was planned from one meeting to the next; this was left to the principal and chairperson to determine. The teacher representative believed that meetings needed to be more frequent if the Council was to be effective and make a difference (Interview Schedule A3). The interviewed parent member also stated that it could be frustrating not knowing when the next meeting would be scheduled (Interview Schedule A4).

Setting Agendas.

On the initial questionnaire, some members expressed concern about the development of the Council agenda. When interviewed, one teaching member commented that the principal would tell us what the agenda was going to be at the start of each meeting (Interview Schedule A3). However, the principal stated that agendas were developed from the previous meetings and the overall school direction (Interview Schedule A1). The parent representative interviewed believed

that meetings were not long enough to cover agenda items and, therefore, a number of important issues were not covered (Interview Schedule A4).

Democratic Decision Making.

The majority of Council members stated on the initial questionnaire that democratic decision-making processes were in place. The chairperson noted that each person was able to have input which was valued and discussed. Two members, however, disagreed and commented on the questionnaire that no real democratic decision making existed; they believed that not all members were being heard or included in school decisions. There was support for this position at the observed meeting where a number of members did not contribute to discussions and were not encouraged to do so (Observation Schedule A).

Arriving at Consensus.

On the initial questionnaire, the majority of School Council members commented that consensus was achieved through ongoing discussion and deliberation. However, the interviewed teacher member expressed concern that the resulting decisions were what the principal wanted in the first place and that members were reluctant to go against those decisions (Interview Schedule A3).

Minutes Kept.

Minutes of each Council meeting were kept, although one member commented on the initial questionnaire that they were not in any real detail. The majority of members, however, believed that this suited the needs of the Council. Minutes were distributed to each member at the next meeting and this was confirmed at the observed meeting (Observation Schedule A). A minutes book was kept and the role of taking minutes was rotated at each meeting. As the chairperson explained, one problem that this created was that the minutes book had gone missing and the minutes of a number of meetings were lost and could not be provided to the researcher (Interview Schedule A2).

Handling Conflict.

As recorded on the initial questionnaire, the School Council did not have any process or plan for dealing with conflict situations that could arise. This had not been discussed or recognised as a need to date. According to the chairperson, any disagreement to this stage of Council operations had been sorted out by talking the issues through (Interview Schedule A2).

Identified Barriers.

On the initial questionnaire, the main barriers identified as preventing the School Council from reaching its goals included:

1. administration attitudes;
2. lack of parental support;
3. time limitations of current schedule of meetings; and
4. overcoming changes within Education Queensland, many of which are rapid and bureaucratic.

School Council and School Management Structure.

The majority of members were undecided as to whether the School Council fitted within the management structure of the school (Initial Questionnaire). The principal noted on the questionnaire that the Council needed to be included in the school's formal structure for decision making.

As the interviewed teacher representative stated, staff as yet, did not see the Council as an integral part of the school's decision-making structure. Although it was a body designed to represent staff and parents, there was little communication between it and these stakeholder groups (Interview Schedule A3).

Relationship of the School Council to other Decision-Making Bodies.

The general consensus of members, according to responses to the initial questionnaire, was that the School Council was not an integral part of the school's management structure at this stage and, therefore, there were minimal relations with the P and C Association, staff meetings and administration meetings.

When interviewed, the parent member stated that the majority of members of the P and C Association and the school staff would be unaware of the operations of the Council. Although there were parent and staff representatives on Council, there had been little feedback to their stakeholder groups. The school principal usually initiated any feedback that was provided (Interview Schedule A4).

Review Processes.

The large majority of members were unaware if a process for reviewing the operations of the Council existed. The principal clarified that this was not seen as a priority at this stage of the Council's development (Initial Questionnaire).

Future of the Council.

On the initial questionnaire, the School Council members were divided in their belief about its future. Half felt positive while the other half were undecided. One teacher representative wrote that the Council needed to be recognised and accepted by all stakeholder groups for it to become truly effective. Another teacher representative made note that many parents and teachers were more concerned with day-to-day operations and found it difficult to deal with the long-term strategic goals of the school.

The school principal believed that the Council needed a more formalised role within school-based management. According to the principal, it needed the freedom to make new initiatives and be able to manage and monitor them without constraints from Education Queensland (Interview Schedule A1).

6.3 Description of School Community: School B

School B was an established Gold Coast City school that had to compete with other neighbouring state and private schools for its clientele. It had a high transient population and on average families were low to middle class with a high number of unemployed and welfare groups represented. The school community voted to adopt the EO 2 model of school-based management although parent involvement was not high. Staff had previously been involved in a school

management group and parent input was through the P and C Association. The School Council met once per term at a venue outside the school.

School B had decided on a School Council composition of six; this was the smallest number allowable within the constitution. Parents and staff were approached by the school principal to nominate for the Council election process and it was formed without having to have a voting process, as there was an exact number of nominations for the positions available. The composition was: principal, P and C president, two teacher representatives and two parent representatives. As with School A, there were no community or student representatives, but a Student Council was in existence at the school.

Table 11 outlines the information gathered from the Council members of School B. As was the case with School A, the large majority of Council members were in the age group of 41 years and over. Only one member was under 41. In contrast to School A, however, all had been at the school for five years or less. There were an equal number of male and female representatives, which is quite unique when compared to the other two schools. Two members, the principal and P and C president, commented that it was a requirement that they be represented on the Council. All others explained that they were asked by the principal to be on the Council. None of the members had any previous experience with School Councils.

Table 11: Information on School Council Members: School B

Information on School Council Members	
Age Spread:	School B
31-40 years	1
41-50 years	3
Over 50 years	2
Length of Service at Present School:	
2 years	1
3 years	1
4 years	3
5 years	1
Gender:	
Male	3
Female	3
Reasons for Being Involved in Council:	
Automatic member as P and C President	1
Leading School/EO2 requirement	1

Asked to be on School Council	4
<hr/>	
Previous School Council Involvement:	
Yes	0
No	6

6.4 Case Study Report: School B

6.4.1 Promoting the Profile of the School Council within the School Community

School Readiness for a School Council.

From the initial questionnaire, it was found that the majority of members were not confident that the school community was ready for a School Council. Even the principal rated the community as relatively 'low' in readiness. The main reason, according to the principal, for the school community deciding to have a Council was that it was a requirement of being an EO 2 level of school-based management and this provided the greatest degree of flexibility in the school's operations. The parent representatives believed that, although there was a small group of supportive parents, support within the school community for the Council was not widespread.

The School Council chair, when interviewed, commented that most stakeholder groups voted for the EO 2 model of school-based management as this was what the principal wanted and that "most people went along for the ride and most did not know what they were getting themselves into" (Interview Schedule B2).

How the School Council is viewed by Parents, Staff and the General School Community?

The general consensus from the initial questionnaire was that all stakeholder groups had little interest in the operations of the Council. The chairperson made comment that although communication with the P and C Association was good, there was little input from it into the School Council. As one parent representative stated, there was no connection between the function of the Council and the P and C Association. According to one staff representative, school staff were

unconcerned with the operations of the Council as there has been no impact on them. Overall, the principal believed that the majority of staff and parents did not really care about it and only a small committed group was involved (Initial Questionnaire).

How is the School Council Profile Promoted?

Overall, the consensus from the initial questionnaire was that the School Council had not been actively promoted within the school community and this was partly why it had such a low profile. Suggestions for its promotion included:

1. newsletters;
2. P and C meetings;
3. ongoing reports to staff; and
4. School Council/administration interface.

The principal commented that it was necessary to lift the Council's profile if it was to be a major decision-making body within the school (Interview Schedule B1).

6.4.2 Roles and Responsibilities of the School Council

Defined Role of School Council.

On the initial questionnaire, all members responded that they were reasonably clear on the role of the Council. The principal noted that the role was stipulated by Education Queensland and most members commented that it involved setting the strategic direction of the school even though they acknowledged that establishing what is meant by 'strategic' was problematic. Only one member, a teacher representative, listed improving student outcomes as part of the overall role of the Council (Initial Questionnaire).

School Community Awareness of Role.

Most members indicated on the initial questionnaire that they were unsure whether the school community would be aware of the role of the Council. According to one teacher representative, because the interest level was so low from

the school community, it was unlikely there would be any awareness of its role (Initial Questionnaire).

Defined Responsibilities.

The majority of School Council members were unsure of its responsibilities. Although members knew they needed to set the strategic direction for the school, they were mostly unclear on how this should be achieved. Most mentioned the importance of meeting the needs of the school community within their role (Initial Questionnaire).

School Community Awareness of Responsibilities.

On the initial questionnaire, all members believed that the school community would not be aware of the Council's responsibilities. One parent representative noted that she was not made aware of its responsibilities when she first came onto it and these were still unclear to her.

When interviewed, the principal commented that the responsibilities were still being determined and tended to change over time (Interview Schedule B1).

Access to Relevant Documents.

The initial questionnaire provided information about access to relevant documentation. The main documents that the School Council had dealt with included the Annual Operational Plan and School Budget. No mention was made of Education Queensland's strategic documentation.

Although the principal, when interviewed, stated that members had access to all necessary documents, he did admit that Council members were not provided with their own set of these documents. He explained that it was necessary for members to borrow them from the school if they needed them (Interview Schedule B1).

The interviewed staff representative commented that members could access documents through the school, but the parent representative stated that parents on the Council did not have access to the documents to help them keep informed (Interview Schedules B3 and B4).

Anticipated Achievements after Twelve Months of Operations.

A number of members expressed on the initial questionnaire an uncertainty as to what to expect from their Council. The most common achievement that was noted involved the establishment of specific priority areas for the school to achieve over the next twelve months.

The school principal stated that the progress and achievements of the Council would be slow and that after twelve months there may be little evidence of any concrete achievements. He believed that these would emerge over a much longer period of time (Interview Schedule B1).

*6.4.3 The Roles and Relationships of School Council Members**Understanding of Individual Roles.*

The majority of Council members stated on the initial questionnaire that they were reasonably satisfied with their understanding of their individual roles. These centred on representing their respective stakeholder groups and keeping them informed. A number of members listed thinking strategically and acting for the good of the whole school. One teacher representative stated that it was important that the Council provide the opportunity for staff to be involved in decision making and that their contributions were not undervalued or undermined (Initial Questionnaire).

Various Roles of School Council Members.

On the initial questionnaire, the majority of members stated that individual Council members had not been given specific roles. The only positions that had been determined were that of Council chair and minute secretary. When questioned about the roles of members, the principal stated that other roles would be determined when the need arose (Interview Schedule B1).

Role of Principal.

As indicated on the initial questionnaire, overall, most Council members held the principal's role in high regard. The staff representatives believed the

principal's role included interpreting departmental initiatives and giving direction to staff and parents.

From the observation of the meeting and minutes of other meetings, the principal was seen to be the provider of most information and dominated most discussions (Observation Schedule B). Even the principal stated that he was in the best strategic position to set the course for the school. The principal explained that his role was to get other members 'on board' and to get them to think along the same lines as he did (Interview Schedule B1).

From the initial questionnaire, only one member suggested that the principal over-dominated meetings and was the only person with the information to make important decisions. Other members seemed to rely heavily on the principal and were happy to agree with his suggestions and decisions (Observation Schedule B).

Role of Chairperson.

All Council members were comfortable with the role of the chairperson (Initial Questionnaire). This involved chairing the meeting and being the spokesperson for the group. However, the School Council chair stated that he did not feel confident in his role and relied very much on the direction and input from the school principal (Interview Schedule B2).

The interviewed teacher representative stated that the chairperson needed to ensure that all members were kept on track and that all members were encouraged to participate in discussions, as this did not always happen (Interview Schedule B3). This view was confirmed at the observed meeting where a number of members had little input into discussions or decisions. Although the chairperson introduced most agenda items, it was then handed over to the principal to explain what each item involved (Observation Schedule B).

Role of Staff and Parent Representatives.

On the initial questionnaire, all Council members could state the role of the staff and parent representatives. These roles involved representing their respective stakeholder groups, gathering issues from and reporting back to them. The

importance of open communication was emphasised by one of the teacher representatives on the questionnaire.

Shared Leadership.

Responses on the initial questionnaire showed that members were divided on whether there should be shared leadership within the School Council. Even though the principal indicated that he believed in shared leadership, other staff members were unsure whether this was desirable or could be developed. One staff member indicated on the questionnaire that the Council did not yet operate this way as the principal was the main school leader and made the majority of decisions. Members of the Council who were in favour of shared leadership stated that no one person should be more important than another, including the principal.

The principal explained that he believed he was the school leader and accountable officer within the school and that the final decision usually rested with him. He, however, maintained that he always made sure that input was received from various staff and parents (Interview Schedule B1).

The interviewed teacher representative believed shared leadership could be enhanced if there was greater communication and greater use of expertise within the group. As the teacher explained, this would allow more members to take on a leadership role and, therefore, allow greater input into decisions (Interview Schedule B3).

Time Commitment.

As confirmed by the previous minutes of Council meetings (Document Analysis Schedule B), the School Council met once per term. From the initial questionnaire, the majority of members believed that this was insufficient to fully cover agenda items. At the same time, they expressed a commitment that they would be prepared to meet more often if required. On the questionnaire, one parent member made note that she was happy to undertake any work, such as readings or additional meetings, between the scheduled meetings.

The principal believed that only one meeting per term was necessary even though some meetings may be busier than others. He indicated that he used the meetings to provide reports to members on the progress of the school rather than seeing it as a decision-making body. He also stated that he had so many other commitments at the school with day-to-day operations that he hardly had time to focus on the development of the Council (Interview Schedule B1).

Positive Relationships.

Members were unanimous that positive relationships were essential to enhance the Council's performance (Initial Questionnaire). The principal stated on the questionnaire that positive relationships were necessary in all aspects of the school's operations and essential for any group needing to work cooperatively within the school. One teacher representative noted on the questionnaire that, although members may have different views, it was necessary that the group have agreed goals and visions. As one parent representative commented, there needed to be mutual respect between members on the School Council.

On the initial questionnaire, Council members listed ways that positive relationships could be developed:

1. not having hidden agendas;
2. members being supportive of one another;
3. valuing others' contributions;
4. having common goals;
5. contributing equally; and
6. having a committed chairperson and principal who are supportive of all members.

Teamwork.

From the initial questionnaire, the majority of members indicated that teamwork would assist the performance of the Council. Two members were, however, undecided on this. The reason given for this indecision centred on the task or activity involved as sometimes decisions had to be made without

consultation or teamwork. One parent representative commented, that for teamwork to be effective, there needed to be greater knowledge of the task or project by all members.

On the questionnaire, all members were able to suggest ways that teamwork could be improved:

1. remaining positive;
2. valuing contributions;
3. setting realistic goals;
4. celebrating successes;
5. representing the group as a team;
6. having clear duties and responsibilities;
7. having good communication;
8. having quality meeting times;
9. being united; and
10. ensuring personalities do not negatively impact on the operation of the group.

6.4.4 Accountability, Monitoring and Reporting

Improving Student Learning Outcomes.

Only two members believed that student learning outcomes would be improved due to the Council's operations (Initial Questionnaire). Their reasons for this focused on the importance of implementing long-term goals and monitoring the achievements of the Council.

The interviewed teacher representative expressed concern whether any improvement in outcomes would have been achieved anyway under the 'old system'. She also commented that she had not seen any improvements to date and that there was no indication that the 'new system' was any better than what was previously in place (Interview Schedule B3).

Even the principal, when interviewed, was undecided whether the operations of Councils, as they existed, would lead to improved student outcomes.

He also stated that he would have to wait and see whether the Council made a positive difference when it came to improving student outcomes (Interview Schedule B1).

Monitoring of School Performance.

All Council members agreed that there were no formal processes for monitoring the school's performance (Initial Questionnaire). Some strategies that had been used to date included checking the progress of the Annual Operational Plan from time to time even though this was not formalised. The principal stated on the questionnaire that the monitoring of school performance still had to be developed and was a future priority.

Accountability of the School Council.

The initial questionnaire indicated that most members believed that there existed a low level of accountability to the overall school community. The belief for this centred on the premise that the principal should be the accountable officer and that the Council should be an advisory body to the principal.

When interviewed, the teacher representative explained that, although the Council approved the strategic direction of the school, it was up to the principal as to how this was operationalised and, therefore, the Council could not be held accountable for the end product. The teacher representative also indicated that it was necessary for a clear monitoring and reporting system to be set by Education Queensland for School Councils so that they were not made 'scapegoats' (Interview Schedule B3). Concern was expressed that Education Queensland may be 'offloading' its responsibilities and accountabilities to schools and in particular to Councils.

Gathering Issues From and Reporting Back to Stakeholders.

Council members stated on the initial questionnaire that the gathering and reporting of data from stakeholder groups was not effectively done. Strategies suggested by staff members to remedy this included surveys, word of mouth,

newsletters and staff meetings; parent members suggested using P and C meetings, surveys and newsletters. As yet, no school-based surveys had been undertaken.

Measuring School Council Achievements.

The initial questionnaire showed, at this stage of development, that the School Council had not established any process for measuring its achievements. The principal stated on the questionnaire that this had not been considered and was not seen as a high priority.

Effectiveness in Achieving Goals.

All teacher representatives on the initial questionnaire were very optimistic about the Council being able to achieve its goals. This was not matched by the responses from the parent representatives. Even the principal was unsure on how effective the Council would be in achieving its goals. On the questionnaire, one teacher representative stated that, although she believed the Council could achieve its goals, this did not necessarily mean that student outcomes would automatically improve.

Making a Difference.

As indicated on the initial questionnaire, the majority of members were uncertain whether the Council would make a difference to the operations of the school. This was confirmed by the interviewed teacher representative who commented that the school would continue as it was whether a School Council was in existence or not. The operations of the Council, in the teacher's eyes, had so far had little effect on the operations of the school (Interview Schedule B3). The principal suggested that, once review and monitoring strategies were developed, this would hopefully lead to modifications to school operations (Interview Schedule B1).

6.4.5 Training and Professional Development

Preparedness for School Council Role.

The initial questionnaire highlighted the following concerns. None of the Council members, including the school principal, indicated that they were prepared

for their role. All members took on their roles with little understanding of what was involved. With School Councils being a new concept within schools, most members stated that they were enthusiastic about their roles even if these were unclear.

Training and Support.

The Council members indicated on the initial questionnaire that there were very limited opportunities provided for support and training. The school principal was the only member to have undertaken any formal training and this was three years ago and provided by Education Queensland. The only identified support received by other members was from fellow members in the form of encouragement and through attending and learning from Council meetings.

The principal, when interviewed, commented that he really needed to attend a refresher course to keep him updated on the operations of Councils as his initial training was some time ago. He stated he would be prepared to attend any further inservice courses or professional development activities in relation to School Councils (Interview Schedule B1).

Identified Additional Training and Support.

All members believed strongly that there needed to be greater support and training for Council members and that this needed to be ongoing (Initial Questionnaire). However, when questioned on this area, the principal believed that he should not have the responsibility of training Council members and that Education Queensland should have a responsibility in this area (Interview Schedule B1).

Identified issues from the initial questionnaire included the need for:

Training

1. a formalised induction program;
2. specific training on how to run a meeting, roles and responsibilities, differentiating between operational and strategic; and
3. District School Council inservice.

Support

1. talks by outside personnel;
2. visits by other School Council members; and
3. attendance at other School Council meetings.

6.4.6 Functioning and Operations of the School Council

Operational Procedures.

On the initial questionnaire, all members expressed that they were unclear about the operational procedures of the Council.

The principal stated that he realised that it was necessary to have some form of operational guidelines to assist members with their roles. He believed that what was currently provided from Education Queensland was not specific and detailed enough to be helpful for new Councils. He commented that they needed specific guidelines to allow them to get on with their core business and defined role of setting school directions (Interview Schedule B1).

Regular Meetings.

The initial questionnaire highlighted that Council meetings were not always regular. Although meetings were planned one per term, this did not always eventuate. In one term, no meetings were held while, during another term, two were conducted. The number of meetings was usually determined by how many agenda items were listed. Some members expressed a concern on the questionnaire that meetings were not scheduled at set times during the term. This had led to a number of members not being able to plan for them and sometimes not being available to attend.

Setting Agendas.

Feedback from the initial questionnaire indicated that most Council members believed that the principal provided the majority of agenda items. However, a number of items would continue from the previous meeting.

At the observed Council meeting, the majority of issues were presented by the principal who spoke to them. Other members would request the principal to

clarify any points of uncertainty. It was noted that some agenda items were raised at the time of the meeting and were not listed items. Members did not receive a list of agenda items prior to their scheduled meeting and, therefore, most members were not prepared to participate fully in any of the agenda item discussions (Observation Schedule B).

Democratic Decision Making.

Most Council members believed that democratic decision-making processes were in place (Initial Questionnaire). This was supported by the principal who believed that, if staff and parents have the opportunity to have input and respond to decisions, then democratic decision making exists (Interview Schedule B1). However, when interviewed, the parent representative stated that, even after discussions, it seemed that the decision made was what the principal had decided in the first place (Interview Schedule B4).

Arriving at Consensus.

The initial questionnaire indicated that very few opportunities had arisen where there had been a formal vote. Where needed, a show of hands was used to decide the majority in favour of decisions. Such a majority was needed for decisions to be approved.

The principal stated that all members had the opportunity to discuss issues and make input into them. According to the principal, there had been no contentious or controversial issues to date to test the process for arriving at consensus. All decisions reached had total agreement and support of the entire Council (Interview Schedule B1).

Minutes Kept.

The initial questionnaire indicated that the majority of Council members were satisfied with the minutes that were kept for each meeting. A minutes secretary kept the minutes and distributed copies of them to Council members. Minutes were kept in a minutes book and were provided to the researcher as part of this research. This allowed the researcher to develop an understanding of the

operations of previous Council meetings. Only one staff member commented on the questionnaire that minutes could be more detailed to help outline issues.

Handling Conflict.

The initial questionnaire showed that most Council members were unsure on how they would handle any conflict situations that might arise. To date, there had been no such situations. The principal stated on the questionnaire that it would be necessary to have some procedure in place in the future. One staff member made comment that, through open discussions and positive attitudes, conflict situations would be minimal.

Identified Barriers.

On the initial questionnaire, members listed a number of barriers that could stop them from achieving their goals:

1. conflict of agendas;
2. lack of communication;
3. one person making all the decisions;
4. not valuing the contributions of others;
5. lack of commitment and enthusiasm from members;
6. lack of time;
7. too much interference from Education Queensland; and
8. other initiatives from Education Queensland.

School Council and School Management Structure.

The majority of members indicated that they were unclear on how the Council fitted within the overall management structure of the school (Initial Questionnaire). The principal, when interviewed, added that there was some uncertainty in roles of various groups, in particular, distinguishing between strategic and operational issues. At this stage, he reaffirmed that there was no formal management structure outlining roles and responsibilities for all groups and the formal reporting relationships. The principal identified this as a future management goal (Interview Schedule B1).

Relationship of the School Council to other Decision-Making Bodies.

The majority of School Council members stated that there was little liaison between the School Council, staff meetings, P and C meetings and other decision-making bodies (Initial Questionnaire). The principal confirmed this view when interviewed by stating that, other than setting the strategic direction for the school, there should be little reason for ongoing communication and liaison (Interview Schedule B1).

Review Processes.

On the initial questionnaire, all members agreed that there were no formal processes for reviewing Council operations. A number of members stated that there needed to be something in place to give them an indication on how effectively they were operating.

Future of the Council.

Only two members indicated on the initial questionnaire that they were positive about the future of their Council. Their comments centred on receiving appropriate support, training and guidance to assist them in their endeavours. The majority of members were either undecided or were not positive. One teacher member noted that she could not see what difference the Council had made at this stage and a parent member stated that she was not convinced that Councils were worthwhile for all school locations (Initial Questionnaire).

6.5 Description of School Community: School C

School C was a country school situated in the Gold Coast Hinterland. The community consisted of many young families as well as a significant number of 'retirees'. The school experienced very strong community support and involvement. At the end of the 1999 school year, the school adopted the EO2 model of school-based management. The principal had been at the school for fifteen years and was a well-respected member of the school community. He believed very strongly in democratic decision-making. In fact, the Parents and Citizens Association had been

operating as a *de facto* School Council for many years. School Council meetings were held regularly with two meetings in Terms 1 and 4 and one meeting in Terms 2 and 3.

School C formed a School Council of six members. Being a smaller school, it was agreed that a small Council was appropriate. The composition was: principal, P and C president, two teacher representatives and two parent representatives. As with the other two schools, there were no community or student representatives, but a Student Council was in existence at the school.

Table 12 outlines the information gathered from the Council members of School C. All Council members were in the 31 to 50 age group. Their length of time at the school varied with a combination of new staff and parents as well as those who had been there for a number of years. Five of the six members were female with the principal being the only male representative. The reasons given for being on the School Council varied with the majority of members responding that they wanted to make a difference and contribute to the future of the school. In contrast to Schools A and B, none of the members were invited by the principal to be on the Council. There were no members who had any previous School Council experience.

Table 12: Information on School Council Members – School C

Information on School Council Members	
Age Spread:	School C
31-40 years	3
41-50 years	3
Length of Service at Present School:	
2 years	1
3 years	2
5 years	1
6-10 years	1
11 or more years	1
Gender:	
Male	1
Female	5
Reasons for Being Involved in Council:	
Previous involvement in school planning and policy development	1
To make a contribution to the future of the school	1
Automatic member as P and C President	1
P and C was already functioning like a School Council	1

Importance of parent participation in decision-making To contribute to decision-making processes	1 1
<hr/>	
Previous school Council Involvement:	
Yes	0
No	6

6.6 Case Study Report: School C

6.6.1 Promoting the Profile of the School Council within the School Community

School Readiness for a School Council.

On the initial questionnaire, all members rated their school 'high' to 'extremely high' in being prepared for a School Council. Both staff and parents stated that the school had always been characterised by shared decision making and strong community support. Comments on the questionnaire included:

1. school community is flexible and responsive to change;
2. the principal has always fostered participation;
3. parent involvement has always been strong and encouraged;
4. a strong sense of community exists;
5. there is a positive feeling about setting own direction; and
6. there exists great community input and support.

The principal saw the formation of a School Council as not causing any major change in how the school operated as it would only formalise the school's culture of shared decision making and devolution of decision making. The principal stated he had tried to develop at the school an ethos whereby shared decision making and community involvement was fostered. The success of the Council, according to the principal, would be greatly influenced by the leadership style of the school principal (Interview School C1).

How the School Council is viewed by Parents, Staff and the General School Community?

The initial questionnaire found that, although the school was seen to be ready for a Council, there was still a belief that the awareness of it by parents, staff and the general school community needed to be developed. For example, although

there had been some positive recognition of the Council, the parent body was still relatively unaware of it. Overall, school staff viewed the Council quite positively with the belief that there would be greater decision making at the school level. The principal stated on the questionnaire that positive perceptions of the Council would occur in all groups through the productive outcomes achieved by it in the future. A positive attitude to the Council by school staff was rated a higher priority by the principal than that of the parents and general school community in that he believed that staff support and confidence was essential for it to operate effectively.

How is the School Council Profile Promoted?

It was identified on the initial questionnaire that a number of strategies had already been implemented to promote the School Council within the whole school community. These included:

1. school and community newsletters;
2. P and C meetings;
3. staff forums; and
4. general correspondence.

Members noted on the questionnaire that, although these strategies were in place, there still needed to be more done in this area and that this was planned.

6.6.2 Roles and Responsibilities of the School Council

Defined Role of the School Council.

The initial questionnaire showed that most members were reasonably confident of their understanding of the role of the Council. They were aware of its overall strategic nature and of trying to improve student outcomes through meeting the identified needs of the school.

School Community Awareness of Role.

Although all members were aware of the role of the Council, most were undecided if the school community was aware of it (Initial Questionnaire). When questioned about this issue, the principal believed that community awareness was a slow process and, because the Council was still in its early stages, awareness was

not currently extensive. The principal explained that community awareness had not been considered at this stage, but would be looked at in the future (Interview Schedule C1).

Defined Responsibilities.

On the initial questionnaire, most members rated as 'high' the level of understanding of the responsibilities of the Council. Such responses included: approving policy, developing the Partnership Agreement, approving strategic documents, gathering information and data, keeping the school community informed, reviewing and monitoring school performance, developing new initiatives, meeting school and community needs and working in partnership with all stakeholders. As the principal noted on the questionnaire, these responsibilities had been discussed and outlined at previous Council meetings.

From the observation of the Council meeting, and the examination of minutes of all meetings held, it was evident that all agenda items were strategic in nature. Council business centred on developing the school's three-year Partnership Agreement. Other key issues included determining the future direction of Japanese within the school, the proposed future of its Preschool facility, catering for future international students and a community decision on the future of its Show Holiday (Observation Schedule C and Document Analysis Schedule C). All these decisions involved a deal of whole-school community input.

School Community Awareness of Responsibilities.

The members believed that the school community would not be fully aware of Council responsibilities and this issue had been identified as an area for future exploration and development (Initial Questionnaire).

Access to Relevant Documents.

The initial questionnaire confirmed that all members were given copies of relevant School Council documentation. This included: Education Queensland 2010, Annual Operational Plan, School Annual Report, Partnership Agreement,

Policy papers, School Council Constitution, Planning and Accountability papers, Statewide Test results and Opinion Survey data.

The Council chairperson explained that access to relevant documentation was necessary for members to be fully informed and, therefore, better able to participate in the decision-making process (Interview Schedule C2). From a review of School Council meeting agendas, it could be concluded that these documents were reviewed regularly at various meetings and were used to inform the decisions made (Document Analysis Schedule C). The principal also stated his belief that it was essential that all Council members had access to all documents in order to plan and review (Interview Schedule C1).

Anticipated Achievements after Twelve Months of Operations.

Most members stated on the initial questionnaire that the priority was to finalise the school's Partnership Agreement, which outlined the strategic direction of the school for the next three years. The principal indicated on the questionnaire that this would involve identifying both departmental and school priorities. He also explained that this would be achieved through understanding Education Queensland documentation, analysing school testing and opinion data and surveying school stakeholders to determine needs and priorities (Interview Schedule C1).

6.6.3 The Roles and Relationships of School Council Members

Understanding of Individual Roles.

The initial questionnaire highlighted that most members expressed a very clear understanding of their individual role on the Council. Whether it was as a staff or parent representative, each member stated that they had to represent their various stakeholder groups. Members further explained on the questionnaire that this involved seeking staff and parent views and input and providing relevant feedback. They believed that they should all participate as equal members on the Council. The researcher through the observation of the Council meeting confirmed that this occurred (Observation Schedule C).

Various Roles of School Council Members.

A number of formal positions had been decided such as chairperson and minutes secretary and roles for these two positions had been determined. This was confirmed through the initial questionnaire, analysis of minutes and observation of a Council meeting. The principal commented that Council meetings were usually quite informal with no formal reports from the P and C Association, administration or from the staff (Interview Schedule C1).

Role of Principal.

Most Council members believed that the principal's role was to be the chief provider of accurate information whether it was in the form of systemic priorities, departmental and school documentation or information on current practices and reviews (Initial Questionnaire). The chairperson made mention that the principal, although the chief provider of information, made sure that all members were given copies of the necessary information so that they were informed and able to participate as equal members when it came to discussions and decision making (Interview Schedule C2).

At the observed Council meeting, the principal was often asked by the chairperson to comment on school and departmental agenda items. However, the principal did not dominate the meeting and the chairperson ensured that all members contributed to discussions (Observation Schedule C).

Role of Chairperson.

The main identified role of the Council chairperson according to responses to the initial questionnaire was to chair and organise the meetings. Other associated roles identified included: facilitating discussions, ensuring everyone was participating and contributing, remaining neutral, keeping everyone focussed, representing the School Council within the community and ensuring true representation of stakeholder groups.

The chairperson undertook these roles well during the observed Council meeting and displayed confidence in her role (Observation Schedule C). This was

also evidenced through an examination of the minutes of other meetings where the chairperson seemed well informed and knowledgeable of the meeting procedures and agenda items being discussed (Document Analysis Schedule C).

Role of Staff and Parent Representatives.

All staff and parent representatives were clear on their respective roles in representing the views and opinions of the staff and parent bodies and providing relevant feedback (Initial Questionnaire).

Shared Leadership.

All Council members were unanimous that leadership should be shared (Initial Questionnaire). Comments included: all members brought skills and expertise to the Council and all members needed to participate as leaders.

The school principal commented that he had always fostered shared leadership within the operations of the school. The principal identified democratic decision making as part of his leadership style. Shared leadership, he believed, was identified as a high priority within the School Council. He endeavoured to foster this through open communication, sharing of responsibilities, valuing contributions, making sure no one dominated discussions and making sure that all participants were encouraged to 'have a go' (Interview Schedule C1).

Time Commitment.

The initial questionnaire confirmed that the School Council planned to meet about six times per year with each meeting being 2 to 3 hours in duration. Council members expressed their commitment to attending these meetings as well as to reading papers, which usually comprised a time commitment of up to five hours per month. The questionnaire also indicated that the chairperson and minutes secretary spent additional time organising meetings and agenda items and preparing and circulating agendas and minutes. Each member expressed satisfaction with the expected time commitments to the operations of the Council.

Positive Relationships.

All members highlighted the importance of positive relationships within the Council and those positive relationships were seen as essential to its success (Initial Questionnaire). The following strategies were listed as being undertaken:

1. open style of communication;
2. encouragement to contribute to discussions;
3. acceptance and valuing of all contributions;
4. making members feel comfortable and at ease;
5. listening to all members; and
6. having relaxed and informal meetings.

Teamwork.

Each member indicated on the initial questionnaire that teamwork was necessary for the successful operations of the Council. The principal stated his aim was to develop a cohesive team with everyone feeling as if they were valued members (Interview Schedule C1). The chairperson commented that, without teamwork, there would be a duplication of effort instead of a sharing of responsibilities (Interview Schedule C2). The Council members listed strategies used to improve teamwork on the initial questionnaire:

1. regular and effective communication;
2. delegating of responsibilities and encouraging contributions;
3. developing trust;
4. making an effort to see and understand the views of others;
5. developing a good working relationship;
6. sharing information and allocating tasks;
7. having common aims and goals;
8. providing social opportunities for the group to bond; and
9. developing an atmosphere where people felt comfortable with each other.

6.6.4 Accountability, Monitoring and Reporting

Improving Student Learning Outcomes.

The majority of members were confident that the operations of the Council would improve student learning outcomes. However, two were undecided (Initial Questionnaire). When interviewed, one staff member stated that there might have been an increase in student learning outcomes whether there was a Council or not resulting from the efforts of the principal, teachers and the Parents and Citizens Association (Interview Schedule C3).

The reasons given for an expectation of improved learning outcomes centred on:

1. development of goals unique and meaningful to the school community;
2. the implementation of the Partnership Agreement through school operational plans; and
3. ongoing monitoring of implementation of the school's strategic documents (Initial Questionnaire).

Monitoring of School Performance.

The initial questionnaire indicated that no formal processes had been developed for the Council to monitor the school's performance. This was recognised by the majority of Council members.

The principal and chairperson both stated that monitoring processes were a future priority and the Council had started to review statewide test data and school opinion surveys to inform the School Annual Report (Interview Schedules C1 and C2).

Accountability of the School Council.

On the initial questionnaire, all rated 'high' to 'very high' the level of acceptance of their accountability responsibilities. The chairperson explained that it was part of the School Council's role to inform and educate the school community. She also commented that it was important that the Council set a positive and

responsible example to the rest of the school community and that its role was to represent the community (Interview Schedule C2).

The interviewed parent member commented that, if the community input was not forthcoming, it may be difficult for the Council to be held accountable for decisions. She added that, for the Council to be held accountable, it assumes that all members are doing their jobs responsibly (Interview Schedule C4).

Because the school community voted to adopt the Enhanced Option 2 Model of school-based management, the principal believed that the school itself should be accountable to the School Council and not to Education Queensland through the District Director. However, the current system of reporting, according to the principal, was to both the District Director and the Council. The principal explained that what he provided to the District Director was identical to what was being given to the Council. The principal made the statement that the District Director was treating all schools identically when it came to accountability, no matter what model of school-based management they had adopted (Interview Schedule C1).

Gathering Issues From and Reporting Back to Stakeholders.

The initial questionnaire identified that processes were in place for gathering and reporting issues from and to staff, parents and the school community. Staff identified on the questionnaire such strategies as staff meetings, surveys, staff discussions and staff newsletters. Parent representatives used newsletters, P and C meetings, surveys and discussions. Processes within the school community included community newsletters, P and C meetings, surveys and community forums.

One member had the responsibility of reporting Council business in the school's newsletter. Evidence of reporting to parents and the general school community through school and community newsletters was sighted by the researcher (Document Analysis Schedule C).

Measuring School Council Achievements.

All agreed that there were no formal processes developed for measuring Council achievements (Initial Questionnaire). The principal further explained that this had not been dealt with at this stage of the Council's operations (Interview Schedule C1). The chairperson believed that this was developmental and successes would be recognised over time (Interview Schedule C2).

Effectiveness in Achieving Goals.

The majority of members expressed the view on the initial questionnaire that they were very positive that the Council would be effective in achieving its goals. The chairperson believed strongly that every member was committed to the school and to the goals of the Council (Interview Schedule C2). The principal commented that realistic goals had been set and, with ongoing review and support, members were very optimistic that they would be achieved. Indications to date, he stated, were very positive (Interview Schedule C1).

Making a Difference.

On the initial questionnaire, everyone stated that the Council would make a positive difference to the school's operations. The consensus was that the school already operated smoothly and the Council should ensure that this continued. The chairperson further explained that, due to the commitment of members and the setting of the school's direction, the Council would enhance school operations (Interview Schedule C2). Although it was recognised that the school was operating smoothly, the principal believed that there was always room for further improvement and this was part of the culture that he strived to develop within the school community (Interview Schedule C1).

*6.6.5 Training and Professional Development**Preparedness for School Council Role.*

As indicated on the initial questionnaire, Council members were only reasonably confident that they were prepared for their role. Most believed that they could have been better prepared especially if formal training had been provided.

Initially, the parents in particular, felt more out of their depth than the teacher members. Most Council members, however, stated that, because shared decision making was a feature of the school, they felt reasonably happy with their involvement.

The principal commented that training had been more of an ongoing type to enable the Council members to discover their general direction (Interview Schedule C1).

Training and Support.

The initial questionnaire provided details of any training and support received by Council members. Three of them were involved in some form of training. This occurred a few years ago when they were invited to a two-day School Council workshop in Brisbane. This involved the principal, one staff and one parent representative.

Other than the two-day training workshop, there was no other external support for the Council members; it was left to the principal to offer any support and assistance. The principal provided the chairperson with written information on meeting procedures and the role of the chairperson, but there was no formal induction undertaken for the Council members.

Identified Additional Training and Support.

Council members were able to suggest additional training and support that would have been beneficial in assisting them with their various roles (Initial Questionnaire):

Training

1. formal induction program for new members;
2. need for ongoing training;
3. formal training on roles and responsibilities for all members; and
4. training to be at a local level and not statewide.

Support

1. need for ongoing support;

2. need for an 'expert' at the district level to support School Councils;
3. need to liaise with other Councils;
4. regular Education Queensland School Council newsletters to keep them informed of what is happening in other schools;
5. establish networks to share information with other Councils;
6. mentoring from other more established Councils; and
7. glossary of Education Queensland terminology to assist parent representatives.

The principal stated that the Council was considering joining the Queensland Association of State School Councils incorporated (QASSCi) for an avenue of future support and networking (Interview Schedule C1).

6.6.6 Functioning and Operations of the School Council

Operational Procedures.

Each member expressed reasonable satisfaction with the operational procedures of the Council (Initial Questionnaire). The principal indicated that, although a formal procedures booklet had not been developed, members were guided by the Council Constitution and Education Queensland documents to assist with operations. The principal also stated that a Council procedures booklet would be collated (Interview Schedule C1). The interviewed parent representative made a comment that meetings were quite relaxed and a semi-formal approach was taken to meeting procedures (Interview Schedule C4).

Regular Meetings.

Regular meetings had been held and this was confirmed by all in response to the initial questionnaire and through an accurate record of minutes (Document Analysis Schedule C). In total, six meetings were planned in a year with two meetings scheduled in Terms One and Four and one meeting held in Terms Two and Three. The Council identified that the beginning and end terms of each year were the busiest for the Council.

The principal commented that additional meetings would be held if the need arose during the year. There was flexibility in the dates and this was determined at the end of the previous meeting (Interview Schedule C1).

Setting Agendas.

The initial questionnaire showed that a number of ongoing agenda items had been identified such as the Partnership Agreement, the Annual Operational Plan and School Annual Report. The majority of agenda items had been built around issues from the three-year Partnership Agreement.

The principal explained that most new agenda items were presented by him for discussion and consideration. The agenda for the next meeting was usually determined at the end of the previous meeting. The chairperson and principal were the main people to present any relevant correspondence. A priority, according to the principal, was to develop an overall twelve-month plan to guide the Council in its major roles and activities and to provide a greater sense of direction for members (Interview Schedule C1).

Democratic Decision Making.

Each member was confident that democratic decision-making processes were in existence. Evidence of this emerged from the following comments within the initial questionnaire:

1. all ideas were heard and considered;
2. everyone was treated equally and as a team member;
3. consensus was always sought; and
4. School Council meetings were an open forum.

The interviewed staff representative confirmed the use of democratic processes within Council meetings. However, although the formalities of reaching consensus and voting procedures had been determined, these were not formally recorded in any document (Interview Schedule C3).

Arriving at Consensus.

The initial questionnaire showed that there had been no identified controversy or any difficult decisions. The principal confirmed this and explained that there had been no controversial decisions that required a formal voting process. All decisions to date had been reached by unanimous consensus. He explained that this had been achieved through brain storming of ideas, discussing and prioritising and involving all members in this process. The principal also stated that, to date, there had been no divergence of thinking between members (Interview Schedule C1).

Minutes Kept.

All confirmed that detailed minutes were kept of each School Council meeting (Initial Questionnaire). The minutes secretary was responsible for this job and also for distributing the minutes to members. The minutes of all previous meetings had been made available to the researcher and all minutes examined were quite thorough and detailed (Document Analysis Schedule C).

Handling Conflict.

The initial questionnaire highlighted that there was no identified process for dealing with any conflict that may arise, and members were unsure on how it would be handled. As the chairperson reported, there had so far been no identified issues of conflict. She believed that this was because of the democratic processes used within the Council. Because all issues were identified and talked through and because of the commitment to what was best for the school, Council members believed that conflict would not be a concern. The chairperson described the School Council as a very cohesive group (Interview Schedule C2).

Identified Barriers.

Although there had not been any issues to date where conflict had arisen, a number of possible barriers to the operations of the Council were identified on the initial questionnaire:

1. people representing their personal agendas and not representing their stakeholder group;
2. lack of funding to achieve goals;
3. key issues and goals being too ambitious;
4. transfer of the current principal;
5. lack of support from Education Queensland; and
6. projects taking longer than originally planned.

School Council and School Management Structure.

The majority of members believed that the operations of the School Council fitted clearly within the management structure of the school (Initial Questionnaire). The implementation of the Council, as discussed by the principal, was seen as an extension of parent and staff involvement in decision making which had always been a part of the school's operations (Interview Schedule C1).

Relationship of the School Council to other Decision-Making Bodies.

No issues or concerns in relation to the School Council and the operations of the P and C Association had been identified (Initial Questionnaire). According to the parent representative, who was both a member of the P and C Association and the School Council, the P and C Association was seen as a forum to gather and report back ideas and issues. Open communication between these two bodies was always encouraged. A School Council report was regularly presented at each P and C meeting after each scheduled Council meeting. Council members were also conscious of involving the P and C Association in developing key strategic issues (Interview Schedule C4).

The school principal confirmed that the school's staff meetings were also seen as a forum for gathering and reporting issues for the School Council. He stated that open communication was promoted between teachers and the Council. Being a small primary school, the school's Administration team was also quite small, but the principal had ensured that all administration personnel were kept informed of the operations of the Council (Interview Schedule C1).

Review Processes.

The initial questionnaire indicated that no formal process had been established for reviewing the operations of Council at regular times throughout the year. The principal commented that this was a future goal (Interview Schedule C1).

Future of the Council.

All members stated on the initial questionnaire that they were very positive about the future of the Council. The chairperson held the belief that it provided an opportunity to open the school even more and formalise the input of parents and teachers. She also felt that having a School Council would allow the school to have greater self management and enable greater input from the community into the school's future (Interview Schedule C2). One teacher representative interviewed, believed strongly that School Councils had been introduced as an accountability measure to move responsibility away from Education Queensland (Interview Schedule C3).

6.7 Conclusion

The data gathered from the initial questionnaires, the follow-up interviews, the observation of meetings and the analysis of documentation have helped to develop an overall description of how each of the School Councils have operated during their first twelve months. This information has been presented under the six focus questions within the research study. The following chapter analyses and interprets these data and relates them to the underpinning theories that have guided this study.

CHAPTER 7: ANALYSING AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

This chapter has three main purposes in relation to analysing and interpreting data from the study. The first is to analyse the data in relation to the broad theoretical frameworks of change and leadership theory that guided the study. The second is to determine whether any additional tentative conceptual understandings or propositions emerged from the research. The third is to analyse the data in relation to the six key focus questions.

7.1 Testing the Underpinnings of the Study

Chapter Three outlined the theoretical background to the study acknowledging the complexity of effecting change and investigating leadership dimensions in educational institutions. The main thrust of the study was to 'test' theory. Two general theoretical frameworks, based on change and leadership theory, guided the study. Data was analysed in relation to the identified theoretical constructs within these frameworks. It was also anticipated that other conceptual understandings or propositions might emerge during the course of the study, but these would have to be regarded as speculative. Their support rested in data and is subject to further investigations in future studies.

The literature suggested that the adoption of any new innovation, such as School Councils, might entail problems or barriers that would limit the effectiveness of its implementation. The introduction of Councils represents a major innovation in Queensland education.

What emerged from this research, as was predicted in the change and leadership summaries within the theoretical chapter, was a range of explanatory categories under change and leadership theory, which encouraged or inhibited the effectiveness of School Councils.

7.2 Analysing the Data against Theories of Change

The introduction of School Councils presents challenges to the traditional bureaucratic decision-making culture within many schools, whereby the principal had control of power and made the majority of decisions. The advent of any new change has the potential to affect all school stakeholders requiring them to reflect on practice, critically analyse it and to experiment with new ways of thinking and acting (Duignan & Macpherson, 1991). The change process also has the potential to impact on the operations within schools.

7.2.1 Readiness for Change

Although all three schools commenced their School Councils around the same time and had been in operation for twelve months, they demonstrated a different level of readiness for both the Council and for school-based management. Wright (1996) found that school communities that already had experience in collaborative decision-making involving parents and staff were more likely to have greater success with school-based management. This also has implications for the success of School Councils. In such situations, parents and staff may feel more comfortable with the expected roles within the Council and be able to assume effective decision-making responsibilities.

Wright (1996) suggested the following strategies to enhance a school community's readiness for involvement in school-based management:

1. knowledge and understanding of issues and concerns related to the introduction of school-based management;
2. knowledge and understanding of the rationale for involving parents and community in school-based decision making in general and in School Councils specifically;
3. skills in collaborative practices and processes; and
4. opportunity to reflect critically on current and potential school management structures.

This highlights that certain conditions may need to exist for increasing a school's readiness for the implementation of School Councils.

School C demonstrated the least difficulty in implementing its Council as it was better prepared to face the challenge of working together due to previous experience. A culture of trust and positive experiences had been established.

At Schools A and B, on the other hand, the perception was that the school communities had not built up a true understanding of the rationale for school-based management in terms of community involvement. This provided an unstable base for the introduction of their Councils.

7.2.2 Willingness to Accept Change

Richardson (2001) cited Askew and Cornell (1998) who have suggested that innovations are generally adopted at a surface level when they are imposed externally on participants. Each of the three schools involved in the study voted to adopt the Enhanced Option Two model of school-based management that involved the formation of a School Council. The majority of staff and parents at Schools A and B did not truly understand what this entailed. Many members of the school community in these two schools saw the formation of a Council as an externally imposed requirement by Education Queensland. This may partly explain why the support for their Councils was not great. Most members were asked to be on their respective School Council without any real understanding of what was involved. The principals in these two schools also suggested that they were forming a Council because they had to, it being a formal requirement of becoming an EO 2 school. Overall, the level of adoption of the Council at both Schools A and B was not strong; there was no evidence of "a deep level of adoption of the innovation" (Richardson, 2001, p. 215) by principal or Council members.

School C, on the other hand, took the approach that they were ready for a School Council and parents and staff were willing participants. The community saw the Council as something that evolved from their current practice and not something that was externally imposed on them. The principal was extremely

willing to adopt and support the process and played an important role in the initial adoption phase. At this school, there was evidence of a deep level of adoption by the principal and willing participation by others.

7.2.3 Changing Behaviours, Beliefs and Cultures

The theoretical chapter suggested that, for change to be effective, it must involve changing cultures within schools (Fullan, 1991). The chapter also highlighted the importance of beliefs and how these may linger despite changing conditions. Richardson (2001), citing Fullan (1992), suggested that people do not discover new meanings or understandings until they have had the opportunity to undergo new experience - "a change in behaviour precedes a change in beliefs" (Richardson, 2001, p. 215).

Certainly in Schools A and B, there was little indication that behaviour had radically changed despite the introduction of School Councils. Hence, it is not surprising that beliefs had not yet altered and the school culture had remained relatively untouched. This is in contradiction to School C where behaviour had changed over more time with its consequent impact on School Council members' beliefs and on school culture.

7.2.4 Ownership of Change

Ownership of a change is a progressive process. Fullan (1992) stated that once ownership is achieved, then real change could be said to have occurred. This is distinctly different to participation. Participation in a reform or change will not necessarily lead to ownership (Huberman, 1992). As Richardson (2001) noted, in her study of the implementation of open learning technology in rural schools, ownership, therefore, occurs when those affected have a true understanding of what it is, have the skills necessary to be truly involved, are an integral part of the change and show a commitment to it. Commitment to a change comes when those involved can see an overall benefit to what they value within their organisation.

After twelve months of operations, only the members at School C could be considered to have achieved ownership of their Council. They all felt part of it and

actively contributed to its operations. They were confident with the workings of the Council and positive about the outcomes they were achieving. The members were developing the skills necessary to be actively involved and demonstrated a commitment to 'their' School Council. It was the Council and not the principal who was driving the process and agenda. Each member was considered equally important.

In contrast, both Councils in Schools A and B demonstrated little ownership. The principals were primarily responsible for decision making and driving the process. Council meetings only happened when called by the principal and members had not been given the opportunity at this stage to develop personal ownership of the Council.

7.2.5 Pressure and Support for Change

Fullan (1992) suggested that, for change to be successful, innovations require both pressure and support. While it might be argued that a degree of pressure existed when the principals opted for the EO 2 status, overall the identified level of support and training at all three schools was very limited.

Initial training was provided for three school community members: the principal, one staff and one parent representative to be involved in a two-day School Council workshop provided by Education Queensland. This training was provided some two years prior to the commencement of the Councils and was part of the Leading Schools Program initiative. Since that time, no additional training programs had been provided by Education Queensland to support School Councils. There was no obligation, other than the school's principal, that the trained members had to be part of the Councils formed. In Schools A and C, these trained members formed the nucleus of their Councils, but in School B, only the principal who received this initial training became a member.

As cited in Richardson (2001), Fullan suggested that change is more likely to be effected if small groups of people are involved at the initiation stage allowing momentum for change to build through the workings of the small groups. A

concern existed, however, in the length of time between the initial training and the formation of each Council. Only in School C was there evidence of the three trained school personnel informing parents and staff of what was involved in the formation of School Councils. The principal established opportunities for development by having the trained members involved in assisting other members with their various roles.

The principal of School C also maintained strong support for the Council and an expectation that all members would be part of the team. The principals at both Schools A and B did not demonstrate the same level of support.

Each member of the three Councils gained varying degrees of experience during their first twelve months of operation. However, no additional workshops or training were provided and none of the Councils had a formal induction program for their members.

7.2.6 Fear and Rejection of Change

Huberman, cited in Richardson (2001), suggested that although teachers are constantly involved in change in normal classroom practice, they often react to large-scale change with hostility. The introduction of School Councils has a pronounced effect on all school stakeholders including parents and staff. Their operations, involving shared decision making and dispersed leadership, may challenge traditional beliefs within a bureaucratic organisation. School Councils may lead to different ways of viewing how schools operate and work. Such a view may prove very disconcerting for some or all school stakeholders. Richardson (2001), referring to Huberman's analysis of Fullan's (1992) concept of the 'meaning of change', noted that the perceptions of one group of stakeholders may be quite different from those of others.

Concerns were raised by administration, staff and parents at both Schools A and B. Although no direct hostilities were evidenced, signs of minimal support for the School Councils were displayed by some stakeholders whose approach was that the Council did not affect them and, therefore, that they did not have to be

concerned with it. Related to a fear of change is also the fear of failure. Some members of these two Councils were not confident in their operations and were quick to point out possible failures. It was evident that they were concerned about not achieving what they had set out to do. While the principals in these schools were more positive, that positiveness was tempered by reservations that did not occur in School C.

At School C, the operations of the Council only continued what had already been occurring within the school community and, therefore, there existed a higher level of support from all stakeholder groups and a greater degree of optimism about the future. In this school, to use Fullan's terminology, there is evidence that change - both generally related to school-based management and more specifically related to School Councils - was fast becoming 'institutionalised'.

7.2.7 School-Based Management as Paradigm Shift

In Richardson's (2001) study of the implementation of open learning technology in schools, she used a framework developed by Imershein (1977) to evaluate whether fundamental changes to accepted practices had occurred as a result of innovations. According to Imershein, an existing paradigm or set of accepted practices will continue as long as the community of practitioners accepts it. While "exemplars and practices exist that support the paradigm, everyone will feel comfortable and accept the way things are done" (Richardson, 2001, p. 223). It is only when an innovation or practice is introduced that the existing paradigm is challenged. According to Richardson, as the new practice is used and replicated, new exemplars may emerge and, if they gain the confidence of the community and are accepted, a paradigm shift will occur and the new practice will become the norm or reigning paradigm. This is exemplified at School C whereby the School Council and more generally school-based management had become an integral part of the school's operations and an accepted part of the decision-making process within the school community.

Richardson, after Imershein (1977), also stated that where the challenging paradigm is weak and offers no concrete exemplars for members to structure their activities, then change is not likely to occur although some aspects of the challenging paradigm may be integrated into the reigning paradigm. Alternatively, some aspects of the challenging paradigm may be modified and the modifications integrated into the reigning paradigm. At Schools A and B, the School Councils, and possibly school-based management more generally, had little impact on the school communities and had not been accepted into the management structure of the schools. Little change has occurred in these two schools in relation to the operations of their respective School Councils and the sharing of decision making. A paradigm shift was not evident in these two schools at this stage.

7.3 Analysing the Data against Theories of Leadership

The move towards school-based management and the introduction of School Councils has had a pronounced affect on the roles of all school stakeholders, including principals, teachers and parents. Although the effect is felt across stakeholders the focus on school leadership is an essential component of this study.

7.3.1 The Role of the Principal

The approach to school leadership taken by the principal is likely to be an important indicator of the success of any innovation in education (Hill, Meulenberg, McNamara and Dewildt, 1991). According to Wright (1996), the leadership of the principal is the single most critical factor in determining the emerging identity of each School Council as the principal constructs meaning, models participatory processes, provides encouragement and vision and performs essential routine tasks. All members confirmed that the principal was the pivotal factor in contributing to the operations of their respective School Councils.

As Johnson (1992) argued, many school principals are facing dramatic changes in their roles as a result of school-based management. School Councils and

devolution of decision making are having a great impact on the way schools operate and on school leadership.

The principal of School C was very comfortable with the collaborative role of the principal under school-based management. There was no conflict in his manner of operations prior to the implementation of the Council. Devolved decision making and shared leadership were characteristics of his preferred leadership style.

At Schools A and B, the principals themselves recognised a difference between their preferred consultative style and the more collaborative style required by the presence of a Council. Both principals believed in consulting parents and staff when making decisions, but were reluctant to let go of that decision-making power and share leadership. For these two principals, there was an identified role ambiguity between sharing leadership and the principal still being the accountable officer for decisions made within the school. They still believed that it was necessary for the principal to have the control and to own the decisions made.

The role of the principals at the three schools both consciously and unconsciously influenced and shaped the general perception and understanding of how the School Councils would function within their school communities.

7.3.2 Principal Dominance

Chapman (1984) argued that some principals, through their control of School Council agendas, their linguistic skill in persuading and influencing others, and their monopoly of information about the day-to-day operation and internal administration of the school, are able to ensure their dominance in relationships with other Council members.

The principals of both Schools A and B exercised considerable power by controlling agenda items and the amount of information that was given to Council members. Although the principals themselves stated that they wanted greater parent and staff input, their actions did not support this notion. Most members were prepared to accept the principal as the main decision maker and were comfortable

with this dominance of Council operations. However, other members did state that there was only token participation and their main role was to 'rubber stamp' decisions made by the school principal. This was the main reason offered for them being disillusioned with the operations of their Council.

Principal dominance was not a feature of the Council meetings at School C. The principal was prepared to share leadership and responsibilities. This was epitomised by the leadership, in both knowledge and operations, of the Council chairperson. A clear vision and belief statements for the school had been established and this was what was guiding the actions of the School Council; members, therefore, displayed greater ownership of their Council and school.

7.3.3 Leadership Styles

It was hypothesised that the leadership style of the principal would be important for the successful implementation of School Councils. For an innovation to be successful, from its original implementation through to its institutionalisation, the leadership of the principal, it was argued, would be crucial. O'Donohue (1997c) believed that changes to school governance in the form of school-based management would require greater collaborative leadership and decision-making processes. Crowther and Limerick (1997) outlined five different leadership approaches that were relevant to contemporary educational settings: Transformational Leadership, Strategic Leadership, Educative Leadership, Leadership as an Organisation-Wide Process and Empowered Professional Leadership. These were detailed further in the theoretical literature on school leadership. Although it is acknowledged that principals may adopt different leadership approaches depending upon the situation confronting them, this analysis was based on the implementation of School Councils and the sort of leadership style likely to be effective in meeting their requirements and underlying philosophy.

The principals in Schools A and B demonstrated elements of both an autocratic leadership style and strategic leadership through their charisma and

articulated vision. Although consultation was undertaken with parents and staff, the main responsibility for decision making rested with the school principal. The school principals were in charge of the management process of their Councils. There existed a top-down approach to decision making within the schools.

In School C, the principal demonstrated elements of transformational leadership and empowered professional leadership. The principal empowered Council members to cooperatively develop a school vision and empowered them to make the vision happen. Shared leadership was created where responsibility for the School Council and its operations were shared by the principal, staff and parents. The principal was very much a facilitator of the operations of the Council and let members take on various leadership roles.

It would appear, therefore, that certain types of leadership styles are more suited to the principles underpinning School Councils. Such leadership styles are characterised by collegial and democratic processes and involve elements of 'empowered professional leadership' and 'transformational leadership'.

It has been argued that under democratic leadership, group members will exhibit a higher degree of initiative, moral cohesiveness, freedom of action and work quality (Hanson, 1979b). Owens (1981) also cited similar conclusions that greater achievement and morale will be reached under democratic leadership. In School C, the principal demonstrated a high level of valuing people, cooperative effort, arriving at consensus, information sharing and task sharing. Such a process was part of his collegial style of leadership. These attributes were not demonstrated to the same degree in the other schools.

7.3.4 Changing Roles: New Leaders

Traditionally, under a hierarchical bureaucracy, the principal has been the accountable officer for all school decisions. Under school-based management, the principal's role is to involve all stakeholders and to include them in the decision-making process. Some principals may find this challenging and in conflict with their usual leadership and management style. Principals may need to view their

position differently; influence will need to be developed through consensus and negotiated decision making and not through authority of position and manipulation. Principals will need, therefore, to learn to exercise influence through, rather than over, others and create conditions in their schools for all personnel to work together to achieve valued outcomes (Conley, 1993).

As well as the principal, teachers and parents may not be able to conceptualise the new roles that they are expected to undertake under school-based management. This study would indicate that this may depend very much on the history of participative decision making that has occurred within the school.

In Schools A and B, both teachers and parents were not comfortable or confident in taking on roles of responsibility and leadership. The principals had not empowered them with the decision-making process within the School Council. In contrast, at School C, the principal was creating greater leadership density and developing leadership skills within each of the Council members. As such, the School Council was much more positive and effective in its operations.

7.3.5 Working Collegially

Huberman (1992) suggested that the professional development that emerges from any innovation or change could have useful spin-offs including a greater willingness to work collegially. All School Council members are in a similar situation being involved in a new change; they share a common non-mastery of the innovation and this may develop an atmosphere of interdependency.

In School C, a close working relationship had developed between the principal, staff and parents. This same level of cohesive working relationship did not exist in Schools A and B. It should be noted that School C is a small rural school and, therefore, it might be assumed that closer social relationships and greater involvement with the local community are more easily established. This may have also contributed to the closer working relationship and team cohesion between Council members.

7.4 Tentative Conceptual Understandings

In the previous sections, the data have been analysed in relation to the identified theoretical constructs within the frameworks of change and leadership theory. In addition, further tentative conceptual understandings within these theoretical frameworks emerged from both the literature review and the main study. They also assisted in explaining what had occurred in the three schools within this study. However, these propositions would have to be regarded as speculative as their support would be subject to further investigations in future studies.

7.4.1 School Community: Representation or Cohesion

The study raised a number of considerations in relation to the significance of school context - location, size, sense of community and clientele - that appeared to influence the commitment to School Councils and the level of support for school-based management.

Schools A and B had similar school contexts being established metropolitan schools with declining school enrolments and limited parent and community support. A sense of community was relatively low. School C, on the other hand, was a smaller rural school that had a well-developed sense of school community. This was exemplified throughout the study with the higher level of teacher and parent support and involvement in all aspects of the school. The school community seemed to be better prepared to face the challenges of working collaboratively due to its previous experiences and context. The nature of the school community, it is argued, had, in part, provided the basis for the successful implementation of a School Council.

In both Schools A and B, a level of difficulty in reaching consensus and moving the School Councils towards preferred models of operation was identified. Barriers and misunderstandings seemed to exist between participants and the level of trust and positive experiences was low. Overall, it was found that elements of community context appear to engender the degree of support, confidence and

enthusiasm for the introduction and operation of the School Council. Wright (1996) also supported such a proposed conceptual understanding in his research into factors influencing the development of School Advisory Councils, where he examined their different states of readiness. Given the nature of this study and the limited number of sites it is difficult to generalise about the significance of these contextual factors, but they do comprise a number of matters worthy of further consideration and suggest that simply providing community representation on Councils without community cohesion will not ensure their success.

7.4.2 Functional Ambiguity

A major issue that emerged in relation to the effective functioning of School Councils concerned the distinction between the terms 'strategic' and 'operational'. Concerns emerged regarding the uncertainty of the types of issues undertaken by Councils and such concerns affected their overall role within their schools. As spelt out by Education Queensland, School Councils have the responsibility for developing and approving the long-term strategic documents such as the school's three-year Partnership Agreement and associated budgets. To do this, involves the identification of system and school priorities and, to develop school priorities, involves the reviewing of school data and performance on statewide testing data and the general operations of the entire school. This is where the separation of strategic and operational issues became very 'cloudy'. Decisions made by the Council might affect the future operation of the school over a period of time.

The Councils at Schools A and B were concerned with many operational issues as well as strategic issues within their schools. These schools had not explored the distinction between strategic and operational roles and, therefore, confusion existed as to what issues the Councils were to undertake. Some members had expressed disenchantment with the types of issues with which they were dealing and indicated that they had anticipated involvement in more operational issues involving their schools. This was evidenced by the number of these types of issues that were put forward at meetings by both parent and teacher

members. The strategic role of the Councils had not been clearly defined in the initial stages. In contrast, the Council at School C was more focused on and dealt with strategic responsibilities and this role was clearly outlined to all members and stakeholder groups. This helped to clearly focus the direction of the Council.

Although the strategic role of the Council is identified within the School Council Constitution, there still exists a great deal of confusion as to what this entails. The operational aspects of the school are to be the responsibility of the school principal, but Councils are clearly in a position to advise the principal in this operational area. The degree to which principals take on board this advice will differ considerably from one school to the next and may depend greatly on the leadership style of the principal. How individual School Councils distinguish between the terms 'strategic' and 'operational' will determine what roles their Councils will adopt and will greatly affect the functioning and operations of each Council.

7.4.3 Continuity and Consistency

It has already been suggested that the three school communities commenced their School Councils in different states of readiness and that this level of readiness influenced Council development and progress. This was based on the history of shared decision making, level of collaborative practices and level of parent and staff involvement.

The relative success of the Council in School C appeared substantially to be related to the long history of participatory decision making and involvement in that school. It was clear that an innovation like School Council introduction could not be expected to be successful overnight. It was also clear, however, that disruptions in leadership style might hamper the evolution process and the Council members were concerned about what might happen if the principal was to move on. As a consequence, while continuity of existing practices is important for an innovation to be adopted, innovations can be fragile if consistency is disrupted.

7.4.4 Puppets on a String

The analysis of leadership theory and focus questions raised as critically important the relationship between principal and Council members. At Schools A and B, members deferred to the principal and the principal appeared complicit in this deferral. Perhaps the notion of Council members being 'puppets on a string' is a bit extreme, but compared with School C, the analogy has some credence. At School C, on the other hand, there was a genuine partnership and the chairperson was a key leader in her own right. Puppetry played no part in school-based management at that school.

7.4.5 Leadership as 'Renaissance Man or Woman'

Within this study two of the three principals were male. The term 'Renaissance Man or Woman', however, was not intended to imply any gender bias. Richardson (2001) used the concept 'Renaissance Man or Woman' to depict the type of skills a principal needs to effectively handle innovations. Such skills were explored in detail within the theoretical chapter. The three principals in the schools studied would also need such characteristics to see through the implementation of School Councils. The theoretical underpinnings to the study indicated that certain styles of leadership may be required for school-based management, but it seems likely that principals will need not only to move from existing styles, but be capable of moving between them as the need arises.

The principals played a key role in establishing their School Councils and their development depended greatly on the support from the principals. At School C, the principal through his involvement and his level of commitment to the Council displayed strong elements of leadership. An overall sense of purpose and direction was created. It appeared the Council developed with more vigour and enthusiasm where combined elements of strategic leadership, transformational leadership and empowered professional leadership were evident.

It is clear that leadership is important for the successful implementation of Councils in schools. However, elements such as leadership approach and change

facilitation, provide helpful explanatory constructs to understand what happened in the case study schools and suggest possible indicators for the success of implementation of innovation in schools. As suggested by Richardson (2001), it would seem, that for an innovation to be successful from its original implementation through to its institutionalisation, our educational leaders need to possess all the characteristics of 'Renaissance Man or Woman'.

7.4.6 'Closed' and 'Open' Models of Schools

Corwin (1974) has described how researchers can cope with the diversity of organisations by constructing inductive models that seek to describe complex patterns of relationships among a large number of key variables. He argued that these models are able to serve as preliminary guides to research by identifying different variables which can be used as a basis for both anticipating and interpreting empirical relationships and for comparing organisations in terms of how well they conform to different models. Corwin described several primary models, which have been applied to educational organisations. One set of primary models, which Corwin depicted, was the closed-open dichotomy. Although Corwin recognised that organisations such as schools did not always fit within one model, there is a tendency in much research for schools to align more closely towards one of the polar extremes of the model.

The closed and open models of organisation are based upon different assumptions about the extent to which organisations can be autonomous from the environment and how important the environment is for understanding processes internal to the organisation.

Sturman (1986) summarised the distinction between the closed and open models as espoused by Corwin.

The closed model, which Corwin felt was the most common, assumed internal organisational characteristics functioned independently from external influences. On the other hand, open models, which Corwin saw as

becoming more common, emphasised environmental influences upon organisations (p. 188).

The schools within this study seemed to display evidence, which would align them closer to the different extremes of the closed and open models of organisation. Schools A and B had a more closed style of organisation while School C operated in a more open style of organisational model. School C was more receptive to the school community and it was an integral part of the operations and decision-making processes of the school. The adoption of a School Council only formalised the processes that already existed within the school community. On the other hand, Schools A and B operated in the main, in isolation from the outside influences of their school communities. Community input was not openly encouraged and operations of the schools seemed to be independent of the operations of the School Councils. In Schools A and B, the Councils seemed to be more an 'add on' than an integral part of the decision-making structure as was evidenced in School C. From this study it can be inferred that the open model of organisation is most suited for the success of School Councils.

7.5 Analysing the Data against the Six Focus Questions

On the final questionnaire (See Appendix 2), undertaken towards the end of the twelve month longitudinal study, each Council rated the six focus areas within this study as to their overall importance in contributing to an effective School Council (See Table 13). Each focus area was rated as High, Medium or Low priority. All three Councils rated all the six identified focus areas as either a medium or high priority in contributing to an effective School Council. This reinforced the importance of these focus areas within this study.

Table 13: Six Identified Key Focus Areas (Final Questionnaire)

	School A	School B	School C
Promoting the profile of School Council within the school community	High	High	Medium
Developing well defined roles, responsibilities and functions of the School Council	High	High	High
Developing roles and relationships of School Council members	Medium	High	Medium
Promoting accountability, monitoring and reporting responsibilities	Medium	High	High
Providing training and professional development for all School Council members	High	High	High
Improving the functioning and operations of the School Council	High	High	High

The following section of this chapter outlines, under each of the six focus areas, a summary of the key findings of the study. In addition, it provides an identification of areas of commonality and difference and a determination of the key factors that account for these. This analysis is based on an assessment of the relative achievements of the three Councils, and likely reasons for such achievements, as well as the opinions of Council members concerning what might increase effectiveness as stated on the final questionnaire. Conclusions regarding the similarities or variations are drawn and, along with the analysis in relation to the theoretical underpinnings of the study, form the basis for possible future criteria to help Councils become more effective. The final questionnaire was also used to help clarify and support the developed criteria, which may assist the effectiveness of School Councils.

7.5.1 Promoting the Profile of the School Council within the School Community

Table 14 provides a summary of how each Council rated the key components within this focus area on the final questionnaire. Both Schools A and B rated this focus area as a high priority as compared to School C, which rated it as a medium priority. Developing the profile of the Council at School C had in part been achieved and therefore may not have rated as highly as the other focus areas. The need for an increased Council profile at Schools A and B was evident.

Table 14: Promoting the Profile of School Council within the School Community

(Final Questionnaire)	School A	School B	School C
A school's readiness for a Council is important.	High	High	High
The School Council is viewed positively within the school community by the parent body.	High	High	Medium
The School Council is viewed positively within the school community by the school staff.	High	High	High
The School Council is viewed positively within the school community by general community.	High	High	Medium
The profile of the School Council is promoted within the whole school community.	High	High	Medium

School Readiness for a School Council.

Although both Schools A and B voted to adopt the EO 2 model of school-based management, there existed some doubt over these school communities being ready for a School Council. For school communities to be ready for a Council, this study suggests that there needs to be a history of high level involvement of parent and staff in decision making and a high level of understanding of what is involved in shared decision making. It was evident that both these schools had adopted the EO 2 model of school-based management without being fully aware of the implications.

School C, on the other hand, had a long history of community support and devolved decision making and the whole school community felt comfortable with the formation of a School Council. The nature of its school community, with a strong sense of community and participation in school activities, increased the chance of success for its Council. Its formation merely formalised the collaborative processes that already existed within the community. All three Councils rated this factor on the final questionnaire as extremely important in influencing the overall effectiveness of the Council.

It can be concluded from this study that when School Councils are introduced it is necessary for the whole school community to embrace the principles of school based management and be involved in the democratic decision making processes. These will ensure a stronger sense of community support.

How the School Council is Viewed by Parents, Staff and the General School Community?

Overall, the level of awareness from parents, staff and the general school community of the School Council in each of the three schools was not very high. This was especially the case in Schools A and B. All schools agreed that the profile of their Council had to be raised through various strategies. Each member recognised the importance of developing a higher profile for their respective Council. This was also supported in the final questionnaire by each of the Councils. At School C, however, greater evidence of school community support was identified through the interactions and closer relationship of staff, parents and the Council.

School C's higher level of school community awareness and support, as well as the Council's identified future actions, would indicate that School Councils to operate successfully need to be viewed positively within the school community by all stakeholder groups.

How is the School Council Profile Promoted?

School C had implemented a number of strategies in an attempt to promote the Council within its community. While Schools A and B had not been so active, they were able to list a number of future initiatives. The principals of all three schools believed that it was necessary to lift the profile of the Council if it was to be a major decision-making body within the school and this was supported by the respective Councils on the final questionnaire.

To achieve greater community support for School Councils, it is essential, therefore, that strategies, such as those adopted in School C, are developed and implemented to increase the overall profile of the Councils.

7.5.2 Roles and Responsibilities of the School Council

This focus area was rated as a high priority by each Council (Final Questionnaire). Overall, it was felt that this had not been fully established in the

initial stage of the development of the Councils. All components within this focus area were rated as high priorities within the final questionnaire (See Table 15).

Table 15: Developing well defined Roles, Responsibilities and Functions of the School Council (Final Questionnaire)

	School A	School B	School C
The main role of School Council is clearly defined.	High	High	High
The main responsibilities of School Council are clearly outlined.	High	High	High
There is a well-developed and clear vision for the school.	High	High	High
Belief statements/goals have been clearly formulated and defined for the school.	High	High	High
All School Council members are aware of the school's belief statements/goals.	High	High	High
The school community is aware of the school's belief statements/goals.	High	High	High
All relevant school documents are available to School Council members to assist them in their roles.	High	High	High

Defined Role of School Council.

In general, most members were reasonably confident with their understanding of the role of their School Council. Education Queensland has stated that the role involves setting the strategic direction for the school to improve student learning outcomes through meeting the identified needs of the school and its community. In Schools A and B there existed, to some extent, confusion as to the distinction between strategic and operational issues. At School C a greater focus was placed on strategic matters and members demonstrated a greater awareness of this role. All three Councils on the final questionnaire supported the need for a clearer distinction between strategic and operational issues. This highlights the need for the Council role to be clearly defined so as to overcome any misconceptions.

It can be concluded, that all School Council members need to be aware of the main role of the Council, in particular, the distinction between operational and strategic issues. It has also been determined that there exists a diverse range of

views, both within this study and within the literature review in relation to School Councils improving student learning outcomes.

School Community Awareness of Role.

Most members were unsure whether the school community would be aware of the role of the School Council. This was a result of minimal promotion within the communities and a lack of communication between the various stakeholder groups and the Councils. The principals and chairpersons of each of the three schools agreed that school community awareness was an identified priority and needed to be planned for in the near future. This was confirmed in the final questionnaire. School C had already started to explore and implement strategies for this to happen, leading to a greater level of community understanding and support for the role of the Council.

From this study, it could be expected that the more community awareness of the role of the School Council would lead to greater support and recognition of the efforts of the Council.

Defined Responsibilities.

The majority of members from both Schools A and B were unsure as to the responsibilities of their Council. Although these members knew that the main responsibility was to set the strategic direction for the school, they were mostly unclear on how this should be achieved. They were not aware of their responsibilities when they first nominated for their respective School Councils and, therefore, were being involved in a decision-making body without knowing what was entailed.

Members at School C, on the other hand, displayed a much higher understanding of their responsibilities and were aware of these in the initial stages of their School Council. This was evidenced in the activities undertaken during meetings.

For School Councils to operate effectively it is necessary that all members be aware of the Council's responsibilities and that these are explicit right from the outset of the Council.

School Community Awareness of Responsibilities.

The majority of members of all three schools believed that their school communities were not fully aware of the identified responsibilities of the Council. This was to be expected, given the finding that most Council members themselves, especially in Schools A and B were unaware of these responsibilities. School C had initiated a number of strategies to develop community awareness of its Council's responsibilities. On the final questionnaire all three School Councils identified the importance of this area and the need for future exploration and development (See Table 15).

It is suggested from the findings of this study and through the future action plans of the Councils, that a greater awareness of Council responsibilities by the school community will enhance the overall support for the Councils.

Access to Relevant Documents.

Not all members of the Councils at Schools A and B had the necessary access to school and departmental documentation to take part in discussions and make informed decisions. Because of this, the principals were the most informed and, therefore, this may have contributed to their control of the decisions made. The parent members felt especially isolated when they did not have access to up-to-date information. At School C, all members were given copies of relevant Council documentation. This was updated regularly and incorporated into reading tasks between meetings, allowing members to be informed and able to participate knowledgeably in all meeting discussions. To allow this to happen all School Council members need to be provided with copies of relevant documentation to assist with their operations.

Access to such documents is therefore necessary for School Council members to be fully informed and therefore better able to participate in the

decision-making process and it important that such documents be reviewed regularly at various School Council meetings. This was confirmed in the final questionnaire as an extremely important factor in assisting Councils to operate more effectively (See Table 15).

Anticipated Achievements after Twelve Months of Operations.

In both Schools A and B, there were no clear goals on what the Council hoped to achieve after twelve months of operation. A lot of uncertainty existed amongst members. The opposite was the case in School C where there was a stated purpose for the Council and its expected goals had been clearly outlined. The Council had played a major role in the process of developing the school's vision and belief statements. All members were, therefore, familiar with these and they were incorporated into the Council's operations and direction. Part of its role was to make all stakeholder groups aware of the school's vision and belief statements and how this guided where the school was heading. This provided the school with a shared understanding of the school's future and a greater unified effort in achieving its goals.

The findings of this study indicate that School Councils need to have well developed vision statements and goals to help give them future direction. Such direction needs to be shared with the school community. This will help to provide greater overall support and understanding of the Council's role and responsibilities.

7.5.3 The Roles and Relationships of School Council Members

Table 16 provides a summary of how each Council rated the key components within this focus area on the final questionnaire. Both Schools A and C rated the importance of the roles and relationships of Council members as a medium priority. School B rated it as a high priority. However, all three Councils rated many aspects within this focus area as extremely important in developing the overall effectiveness of a School Council (Final Questionnaire).

Table 16: Developing Roles and Relationships of School Council Members
(Final Questionnaire)

	School A	School B	School C
All School Council members are clear on their overall role and function within the School Council.	High	High	High
All School Council members are clear on their individual role on the School Council.	High	High	High
Specific roles have been determined for various School Council members.	High	High	Medium
The role of the principal on the School Council is clearly defined.	Medium	High	High
The role of the School Council chairperson is clearly defined.	Medium	High	High
Shared leadership is promoted among all members of the School Council.	Medium	High	High
Strategies are in place to develop shared leadership within the School Council.	Medium	High	High
The main roles of the staff and parent School Council representatives are clearly defined.	Medium	High	High
School Council members are aware of the time commitment required to be on the School Council.	Medium	High	Medium
Teamwork is developed and encouraged within the Council.	High	High	High
Positive relationships are fostered within the School Council.	High	High	High

Understanding of Individual Roles.

Overall, the level of understanding of individual roles within the three School Councils varied considerably. It ranged from very little clarity to total comfort with their respective roles. Staff and parent representatives were generally happy, identifying their role as representing various stakeholder groups when making decisions. However, other than this representation, there was little understanding of what else was involved in their roles. Most members were not made aware of their respective roles before they were nominated or asked to be on the Council; they took on their roles without a real understanding of what was involved or expected. School C provided a general information process for Council members when the Council was first formed; the other two Councils had not formally discussed roles of members at any of their meetings or through any formal induction process. On the final questionnaire, all three Councils highlighted the

importance of members needing to understand clearly their roles for the effective operation of their respective Councils (See Table 16).

It can be concluded from the greater understanding of their individual role by members on Council C that all Council members need to be inducted at a very early stage as to their specific role on Council.

Various Roles of School Council Members.

The three Councils had to some degree formalised specific roles. In most cases, this was limited to a chairperson and a minutes secretary. School C had started to formalise other roles such as a public relations officer to write articles in the school newsletter, staff representative to report back to staff meetings, and parent representative to report back to P and C Association meetings. The development of specific roles was rated highly by all Councils on the final questionnaire (See Table 16).

The study indicated that a formalisation of specified roles within the Councils would help enhance the general operations and effectiveness of the Councils.

Role of the Principal.

It was evident from the operations of the Councils at Schools A and B that the principals were the most dominant members. They led the majority of discussions and were the main providers of information. Most other members tended to take a 'back seat' approach; they did not contribute to many discussions and were prepared to go along with the decisions of the principals. However, a number of members did comment that the principals needed to let go of their authority and be prepared to share leadership amongst members.

This shared leadership was evident at School C where members were able to participate equally when it came to discussions and decision making. The principal in this situation did not dominate the meeting and the chairperson ensured that all members contributed to discussions. The principal's role had been outlined during the initial information process and involved:

1. managing and developing team performance;
2. working closely with the chairperson;
3. keeping members on task;
4. having an equal role as other members;
5. helping determine the direction of the school;
6. interpreting departmental initiatives and direction to staff and parents;
7. being the chief provider of accurate information whether it was in the form of systemic priorities, departmental and school documentation, information on current practices and reviews;
8. sharing leadership among members; and
9. making sure all members feel valued.

It can be inferred from the findings of the study that School Councils wishing to promote shared decision making need principals who are prepared to share leadership and not be controlling or over dominant in the operations of the Council. It is important that the role of the principal be clearly defined.

Role of the Chairperson.

Most members were comfortable with the role of the Council chairperson. However, during meetings, the approach taken by the three chairpersons varied considerably. At both Schools A and B, the chairpersons introduced agenda items, but handed over straight away to the principals for further clarification and to lead the discussions. This was the case with the majority of agenda items. Most members had little input into discussions or decisions.

At School C, the chairperson displayed confidence in the role and was well informed and knowledgeable about most agenda items. All members of this Council were encouraged to contribute to discussions and were given the necessary information prior to the meeting to be informed and prepared to take part in decision making. This meant that there was not an over-dependence on the principal to inform members and make the majority of decisions. The roles of the chairperson had been discussed at the initial information meeting and involved

1. working very closely with the principal;
2. guiding and encouraging other members;
3. involving all members in discussions and encouraging them to contribute to decisions;
4. introducing agenda items;
5. leading the majority of discussions;
6. chairing the meeting in a calm and respectful manner;
7. being the spokesperson for the group;
8. ensuring that all members are kept on track;
9. facilitating discussions;
10. remaining fair and neutral;
11. representing the Council within the community; and
12. ensuring true representation of all stakeholder groups.

At School C, the chairperson undertook a very important and responsible position. The roles had been discussed and shared among Council members before the chairperson was elected and it would appear, because of the initial role awareness, it helped to ensure that the most suitable person was elected.

To help facilitate shared leadership, it is necessary for the chairperson to be aware of his or her role and to implement devolved practices within the Council. The role of the chairperson needs to be clearly defined so that the Council nominates the most suitable person to this position.

Role of Staff and Parent Representatives.

The majority of staff and parent representatives on the three Councils were aware of their role of representing and liaising with various stakeholder groups, which involved:

1. representing the views and opinions of the staff and parent bodies and providing relevant feedback;
2. reflecting accurately opinions of the whole staff and parents and not of minority groups or individuals; and

3. gathering issues and also reporting back to stakeholder groups.

However, in all schools there were no formal processes for undertaking these roles. It was done in an informal way through general discussions with staff and parents. At School C, emphasis was placed on the importance of open communication and keeping parents and teachers informed of all Council issues. School C was currently formalising the processes for sharing the operations and activities of the Council. All three Councils agreed on the need to formalise the role of the various staff and parent representatives and rated this on the final questionnaire as a medium to high priority for future action (See Table 16).

Evidence suggests that specific roles for staff and parent representatives need to be determined to assist in the operations of the Council. A formal process for reporting to and from stakeholder groups will help to enhance the success of the Councils. Each Council has determined that such actions will be a future priority. This will enhance further support for the Councils.

Shared Leadership.

Some Council members were uncertain as to whether there should be shared leadership and a number of arguments were presented for and against it. The arguments for included:

1. overcoming principal or chairperson dominance of meetings;
2. increasing the level of communication;
3. involving more members in Council decisions and operations;
4. sharing workload;
5. ensuring that no one person was more important than another; and
6. promoting greater use of expertise within the group.

The arguments against included:

1. meetings becoming vague in direction;
2. fewer decisions being made;
3. the principal being the accountable officer;
4. taking too much time;

5. the principal being the main school leader and making the majority of decisions; and
6. some members not feeling comfortable with undertaking leadership roles.

Despite the arguments against, the majority of School Council members were in favour of increasing shared leadership. At School C, a history of shared leadership was evident and this had flowed into the operations of its Council. The principal had been at the school for many years and had always fostered shared leadership and had identified democratic decision making as part of his leadership style.

The study strongly supported that for School Councils to have a greater chance of success there needs to exist shared leadership amongst Council members. There is a greater chance of this happening where there has been a history of devolved decision making previously within the whole school community.

Teamwork.

Teamwork was also seen as essential for improving the performance of each of the Councils. The aim was to create effective and cohesive teams with all members feeling that they are valued members of the team. School C had acknowledged that, for teams to be effective, it was essential that members pulled in the same direction and, therefore, it was necessary that the Council had agreed visions and goals. The principal at School C played a major role in allowing this teamwork to be fostered. This was another area rated as a high priority by all three Councils on the final questionnaire (See Table 16).

Within the study, teamwork was identified by all School Councils as being essential for the effective operations of the Councils. Strategies therefore need to be developed and implemented to promote teamwork.

Positive Relationships.

Each member was convinced that positive relationships were required for a Council to be effective. It was accepted that members might have different views,

and these should be respected, but it was argued that, if the Council had agreed-upon goals and objectives, then it should be able to work in unison.

While each of the Councils had identified strategies to enhance positive relations (see Chapter 6), School C exhibited the majority of these strategies in its operations. In Schools A and B, the rhetoric did not always match the practices being implemented. On the final questionnaire, all three Councils recognised the importance of positive relationships for the continued effectiveness of the School Council rating it as a high priority (See Table 16).

Positive relationships were identified within the study as being necessary to support the operations of School Councils. Strategies to promote positive relationships should be addressed and promoted.

Time Commitment.

All members were satisfied with their expected time commitments, even though not all were fully aware of these before they nominated to be on the Councils. However, the majority were prepared to meet more often and for longer periods if that led to greater effectiveness and the creation of a better opportunity to achieve their goals.

School C had discussed and documented the expected time requirements for their Council members while, at Schools A and B, this was informal, leading to some confusion as to what was expected.

It is recommended that School Council members need to be aware of the expected time commitments required to be on the Council prior to the Council nomination process.

7.5.4 Accountability, Monitoring and Reporting

Table 17 provides a summary of how each Council rated the key components within this focus area on the final questionnaire. Schools B and C, rated this focus area as extremely important, compared with School A, which rated it as a medium priority. All Councils, however, rated many of the key components within this area as high priorities for future action.

Table 17: Promoting Accountability, Monitoring and Reporting Responsibilities
(Final questionnaire)

	School A	School B	School C
There is a process for determining how effective the School Council will be in undertaking its role.	Medium	High	Medium
There are measures in place to substantiate that the School Council has made a difference to the operations of the school.	Medium	High	Medium
The School Council has a process for monitoring the school's performance.	High	High	High
The School Council is accountable to the school community.	Medium	High	High
The School Council has strategies to gather data and issues from staff, parents and the general school community.	High	High	High
The School Council has a process to report back to the school staff, parents and community.	High	High	High
The operations of the School Council will endeavour to improve student learning outcomes at the school.	High	High	High

Student Learning Outcomes.

The majority of Council members in Schools A and B were undecided as to whether its operations would result in improved learning outcomes for their students. The reason for this uncertainty was based on the belief that improved learning outcomes could be achieved without a formal School Council through the efforts of the principal, staff and parents.

However, the majority of the members in School C were confident that the operations of the Council would ultimately improve student learning outcomes through effective long-term planning that included:

1. identification of school community needs, focussing strategically on children's needs;
2. development of goals unique and meaningful to the school community;
3. ongoing monitoring of the implementation of the school's strategic documents;
4. deploying resources more effectively; and
5. setting benchmarks and monitoring outcomes.

The overall goal of School Councils should be to help improve student learning outcomes. The literature review cites many examples of arguments supporting and rejecting this statement. This study supports the premise that where a School Council is operating effectively it creates the foundations for the ultimate goal of improved student learning outcomes. This inference is based on the effective operations of School C's Council within this study.

Monitoring of School Performance.

None of the School Councils had formulated a formal process for monitoring their school's performance. Each stated that such a process still needed to be developed and would be a future priority. Most members were more concerned with current issues and had not contemplated monitoring the school's long-term performance. On the final questionnaire this component was rated as a high priority for future action by all three Councils (See Table 17).

The case studies do not provide any direct evidence to support the effective monitoring of school performance. However, each of the Councils has indicated that they will pursue such a process in the future. It can only be inferred that Councils in the long term may require some process in place for monitoring their performance to assist in their operations.

Accountability of School Council.

Where Council members were confident that the School Council would make a positive difference to students' learning outcomes, as was the case in School C, there was support for the concept of Council accountability to the community. Some members, especially in Schools A and B, were not prepared to commit the Council in this way because it was argued that the principal was the accountable officer and the Council should only be an advisory body to the principal.

However, the majority of members of School C expressed a high level of acceptance of Council accountability. The study, based on the findings at School C, indicates that an effective School Council would be prepared to be accountable to the whole school community. With shared leadership and devolved decision

making comes an acceptance of accountability. This premise was also supported within the leadership literature in the theoretical framework chapter.

Gathering Issues From and Reporting Back to Stakeholders.

In both Schools A and B, there were no formal processes in place for gathering and reporting issues from and to staff, parents and the school community. This was either undertaken by the principal or through incidental measures. Usually, these strategies were not formal or consistent. At School C, processes were being formalised. These were being planned to provide greater two-way communication between the Council and stakeholder groups. On the final questionnaire, all three Councils rated this component as extremely important in improving Council effectiveness (See Table 17).

The importance of effective communication is highlighted in the effective operations of Councils and this would entail having in place strategies for gathering from and reporting issues to staff, parents and the general school community.

Measuring Achievements.

None of the Councils had any formal processes developed for measuring their achievements. The principal of each school stated that this has not been considered at this stage of development and was not seen as a high priority. However, each of the School Councils was planning to investigate strategies to measure achievements that would then be published in future School Annual Reports and published in school newsletters to inform the school community. All Councils rated this factor as a high priority on the final questionnaire (See Table 17).

The longitudinal study could not provide any observable evidence that measuring achievements would assist in making the School Councils be more effective. However, the Councils' plans to pursue strategies in the future highlight the importance of such actions.

Effectiveness in Achieving Goals.

In Schools A and B, some members were very positive that the Council would be effective in achieving its goals while others believed it might be quite ineffective. The operations of these Councils seemed to depend directly on the principals and the rest of the administration team. There was not a total commitment identified from Council members towards their overall success.

The majority of Council members in School C, on the other hand, were very positive in their belief that it would be effective in achieving its goals. They had shown a commitment to the school and to the goals of the Council.

Where a School Council has clearly defined goals and a commitment to working towards achieving these, there is a greater chance of the Council achieving its goals.

Making a Difference.

Most members believed that the School Council would make a difference to the operations of the respective schools. However, at Schools A and B it was believed that it may take quite some time before any difference would be seen. Within Schools A and B, there existed a view from some members that the operations of Councils may make little difference and that any improvements may have occurred with or without a Council in existence.

This was in contrast to School C where members believed that it would make a positive difference to the school's operations and the effects of this would be more immediate. The principal demonstrated a greater commitment to establishing the Council as an effective decision-making body and being responsible for its own growth and development.

On the final questionnaire, all three Councils rated highly, the importance of improving student learning outcomes, through the effective operations of each of the Councils (See Table 17).

This study highlights the need for Council members to be positively committed to its operations and display confidence in its capacity to make a difference to the operations of the school.

7.5.5 Training and Professional Development

Table 18 provides a summary of how each Council rated the key components within this focus area. All three School Councils rated as high priority, the need to provide training and professional development for all Council members (Final Questionnaire). Overall, this focus area was identified by all Councils as needing greater support and enhancement.

Table 18: Providing Training and Professional Development (Final Questionnaire)

	School A	School B	School C
All School Council members are confident in being prepared for their role on the School Council.	Medium	High	Medium
Support or training has been undertaken in preparing School Council members for their role on the Council.	High	High	High
An induction process is undertaken for all new School Council members.	High	High	High

Preparedness for School Council Role.

Very few Council members stated that they were prepared for their role. This was especially evident in Schools A and B. The majority of these members went onto their Councils without any prior knowledge or training as to what was involved or expected of them. In most cases, they were approached by the principals and asked to nominate for the Council. Even the principals were not confident of what was expected of them. However, the majority of members were enthusiastic about their roles even if these were unclear.

Even members of School C's Council believed that they could have been better prepared through initial formal training. Parents, especially, felt more out of their depth as compared to the staff members. As a School Council, they had explored their overall role and responsibilities, but there still existed some doubt as to their preparedness.

The research and supporting literature identified the need for Council members to be confident and prepared for their role through undertaking appropriate training and being provided with the necessary support.

Training and Support.

Very few members of the three Councils had received any formal training. What training had been undertaken was some three years ago provided by Education Queensland for up to three members from the school community. In recent years, there had been no coordinated training program provided by Education Queensland.

Support for School Council members was restricted to assistance being provided by the school's principal and other Council members. This level of support varied between each of the three schools, but none of the Councils had any form of formal induction program. School C had implemented an informal process to support Council members. All three Councils agreed on the need to develop a formal induction program and rated this as a high priority on the final questionnaire (See Table 18).

This study identifies the need for ongoing support and training for all School Council members so that they are all effective members of the Council. In addition all Councils need to have a formal induction program in place to assist all future new members when appointed to the Council.

Identified Additional Training and Support.

All members could identify some forms of support or training that would have better prepared them for their roles. The type of support and training varied from local school-based initiatives through to district and possible state-level initiatives and included knowledge on Council legislation, functions and operations, as well as strategies to develop working relationships with stakeholders. At present, schools are being given the responsibility for the initial and ongoing support and training of Council members. All three Councils requested further support from Education Queensland to provide assistance with initial support for

Councils as well as the ongoing training and professional development of members both at a district and state level. None of the three Councils had accessed support through the newly established Queensland Association of State School Councils incorporated (QASSCi).

It is necessary for School Council members to continue to access ongoing training and professional development. The responsibility for this should lie with the school, district and state educational authorities. Schools Councils should also be encouraged to become members of QASSCi to access further support, training and networking.

7.5.6 Functioning and Operations of the School Council

On the final questionnaire, each Council rated its functioning and operations as a high priority. Table 19 provides a summary of how each Council rated the key components within this focus area. All key components within this focus area were rated as either medium or high priorities in improving future Council operations.

Table 19: Improving the Functioning and Operations of the School Council (Final Questionnaire)

	School A	School B	School C
The operational procedures of the School Council are clearly defined.	High	High	Medium
Each member of the School Council has a School Council handbook.	High	High	Medium
Each member of the School Council has a copy of the School Council Constitution.	High	High	Medium
School Council meetings are scheduled regularly.	High	High	High
There is a set method for developing agenda items.	High	High	High
A timeline of major responsibilities has been developed for a twelve-month period.	Medium	High	Medium
Democratic decision-making processes are in place.	High	High	High
There is a process for achieving consensus in decision making within the School Council.	High	High	High
Detailed minutes of School Council meetings are kept and circulated to all School Council members.	High	High	High
There are strategies for the School Council to deal with any difficulties or conflict situations in its general operations.	High	High	Medium
The School Council attempts to identify any barriers that may prevent the School Council from reaching its goals and achievements.	Medium	High	High
The School Council clearly fits within the management structure within the school.	Medium	High	High

The relationship between the operations of the School Council and the school's P and C Association is clearly defined.	Medium	High	High
The relationship between the operations of the School Council and the school's other decision-making bodies (e.g. staff meetings, Administration meetings, etc) is clearly defined.	Medium	High	High
There is a process in place for reviewing and modifying the operations of the School Council at regular times throughout the year.	High	High	High
The School Council members feel positive about the future of the School Council.	High	High	High
The School Council members have explored future operations of the School Council and possible expanded future roles and responsibilities.	Medium	High	Medium

Operational Procedures.

The majority of Council members at Schools A and B were not clear about operational procedures. Operational procedures or guidelines had not been formally developed for any of the School Councils and, except for School C, most members were not familiar with the Constitution that had to be in place. All principals and chairpersons believed that it was necessary to develop some operational guidelines to assist members with their roles.

As a high priority each Council was planning to collate a procedures booklet to clearly outline operational procedures because information currently provided by Education Queensland was considered not specific and detailed enough to be of assistance for newly formed Councils (Final Questionnaire).

This study highlights the need for School Council members to be given clear direction through well developed operational procedures and easy access to all relevant documentation such as a copy of the Council Constitution and Council Handbook.

Regular Meetings.

Most School Council meetings were scheduled about once per term. In Schools A and B, the responsibility for calling meetings lay with the principal. There was not a set date from one meeting to the next. This left members a little

uncertain as to when meetings would be called and sometimes short notice was given.

At School C, regular meetings were held and the next meeting date was always confirmed at the end of each meeting. This gave advance notice and time to be prepared. This Council was also planning to develop a schedule for all its meetings throughout the year. The principals at all three schools indicated that it might be necessary from time to time to hold additional meetings.

This study highlights the importance for School Council meetings to be scheduled regularly so that members may be prepared for meetings.

Setting Agendas.

The agenda plays an important role in any meeting as it outlines what is to be covered and, therefore, can apply time restraints or limits to each item. At both Schools A and B, the majority of Council members were unaware of what agenda items were to be covered for each meeting. This led to many items being raised at the meeting itself allowing the meeting to be side-tracked moving it away from the scheduled agenda items. This was expressed by Council members as an ongoing concern on their initial questionnaire and confirmed at the observed Council meetings.

This was in contrast to School C. While a number of ongoing agenda items were identified which flowed from one meeting to the next, the agenda for the next meeting was developed at the end of each subsequent meeting. Examination of previous minutes confirmed this process. School C had also established a procedure to allow new concerns or business to be included in future agendas. Each member had an opportunity to include items on the upcoming agenda which, when compiled, was made available to the other members in plenty of time before the scheduled meeting. All were, therefore, well prepared and this enabled them to have input into discussions. Agenda items that required background reading were provided well in advance of the meeting. The Council chairperson had responsibility for supplying information and she consulted with the principal, not

the other way round. Leadership was, therefore, genuinely shared with the Council chairperson. On the final questionnaire, all three Councils rated a high priority the need to have a set method for developing agenda items for future operations (See Table 19).

The School Council at School C was planning to develop a twelve-month timeline outlining the major activities and roles to be covered and a suggested timeline to undertake them. Schools A and B also rated this component as a medium/high priority to assist in the operations of their Councils (See Table 19).

For School Councils to operate effectively this study indicates that there needs to exist a set process for developing agenda items with all members being able to have input. Forward planning of major activities and responsibilities of the Council should be clearly outlined.

Democratic Decision Making.

Most Council members at Schools A and B believed that democratic decision-making processes were in place. All were invited to have input into decisions and discussions, but most, especially the parent members, were reluctant to contribute. They considered that they were not informed enough about the topic to present ideas. In most cases, the decisions made were what the principals had presented and the Councils were really just 'rubber stamping' those decisions.

At School C, the Council members believed that shared decision making was taking place; each member was treated equally and the Council genuinely made decisions, not just the principal.

On the final questionnaire, all Councils rated the need for democratic decision making as a high priority to help improve the functioning and operations of each Council (See Table 19).

School Councils have a greater chance of success where shared decision making is fostered and democratic decision making processes are in place.

Arriving at Consensus.

There was no formal process for reaching consensus at two of the School Councils and at the other there was a formal voting procedure. At the two schools without a formal process, consensus was usually achieved through ongoing open discussion and deliberation and, where needed, a show of hands was used to decide the majority in favour of decisions. Usually, this meant that a majority of only one was needed for a decision to be approved. Overall, however, there have existed very few opportunities where a formal vote was required for any contentious issue. The School Councils were unsure what would happen if there ever existed an issue where there was not total consensus and where opinions were divided. All three School Councils recognised the need to have a formalised process in place if any controversial issues arose. This was rated as a high priority by each Council on the final questionnaire (See Table 19).

None of the three School Councils could cite any issues, which arose, where there was not overall consensus in decisions made. Therefore data from the study do not highlight the importance of having a process to reach consensus of decision making. However, literature and the Councils' rating of this as a future high priority in case of contentious issues indicates the possible need for having such a process established.

Minutes Kept.

All three School Councils kept minutes of their meetings and the majority of members were satisfied with the detail of these minutes. At Schools B and C, a minutes secretary was responsible for the minutes but, at School A, this task was rotated from one meeting to the next. Except for School C, minutes were not always given to Council members prior to their next meeting; rather, a copy of the minutes were either read or handed out to members at the start of the meeting.

None of the Councils had a process for distributing or sharing their minutes with different stakeholder groups. School C was investigating including the

minutes as part of the Council's P and C Association Report each month and making the minutes available to the staff by attaching them to the staff newsletter.

It is inferred, from the actions of all three Councils and the feedback from Council members, the importance of keeping detailed minutes of each Council meeting and also the need to provide all members with copies of such minutes.

Handling Conflict.

None of the three Councils had developed any process or plan for dealing with conflict situations that may arise. Although this had not been recognised as a need to date, each School Council planned to pursue this issue further. There had been no identified conflict situations within any of the Councils. Disagreements to this stage had been sorted out by talking the issues through as a whole group. Most members were uncertain as to how they would handle conflict situations.

The members of School C's Council believed that, because of the effectiveness of their democratic processes, issues of conflict would be easily overcome. Their group had a common purpose and commitment to the goals of the Council; they had developed a close group unity and cohesiveness and, therefore, conflict was unlikely to be an issue. It was recognised, however, that should there be a change of principal this situation could change.

This research can not provide any direct evidence to support the need for School Councils having a plan to handle conflict, as conflict had not arisen within the Councils. However, this area was rated as a future priority in case conflict situations arose.

Barriers.

Each of the three School Councils was able to list a number of possible barriers that could prevent them from reaching their goals. These varied from relationships with Education Queensland, funding, communication, time constraints, stakeholder support to internal Council operations. The Councils rated highly the need to explore and identify possible barriers and be prepared to deal with these should they eventuate (Final Questionnaire).

This study concludes from the medium to high priority placed on this area by each of the School Councils that Councils may need to be aware of any possible barriers that may prevent them from reaching their goals and have strategies in place to prevent them. However, no direct evidence of this was found within the study.

School Council and School Management Structure.

Due to the varying sizes of the three schools, their management structures varied considerably. School A, having two deputy principals and a registrar, had an identified Administration Team which played a major role in the decision-making process at that school. The other two schools did not rely on an Administration Team, but more on a management committee made up of representatives from administration, staff and parents.

Overall, the majority of members believed that the Council fitted within their school management structure. A number of parent representatives, however, were not so convinced and, similarly, most members believed that the majority of school staff and parents would not see how the Council fitted into the overall management structure of the school because of limited communication between the Council and stakeholder groups. This was especially the case at Schools A and B.

None of the Councils had defined a formal school management structure that outlined formal roles and responsibilities. This has been identified on the final questionnaire as a medium/high priority by all three Councils as a future management goal (See Table 19).

However, the Council at School C was seen as an integral part of the decision making process within the school and was incorporated into the management structure of the school. School Councils, therefore, should not be seen as an 'add on' or 'separate' to the other bodies within the school. The successful operation of school C's Council supports this premise.

The School Council and its Relationships to other Decision-Making Bodies.

The majority of members at both Schools A and B believed that there was little liaison between the School Council, staff meetings, P and C meetings and other decision-making bodies within their schools. It appeared that the majority of staff and parents had little understanding of what the Council involved and its purpose. It was seen as an external body that so far had little impact on their operations.

School C had always had close working relations between all decision-making groups and strategies had been developed to provide a growing profile of the School Council and to allow it to liaise with stakeholder groups. There had been no identified issues or concerns in relation to the Council and the operations of the P and C Association. The Council was aware of the importance of involving and consulting with staff and parent groups in their decision-making processes especially when formulating key strategic directions.

This study, based on the successful practices of School C, identifies the need for the relationship of the School Council to other decision-making bodies within the school to be clearly defined so that all stakeholders are aware of this.

Review Processes.

No Council had a formal process established for reviewing its operations. This was not identified as a high priority within the first twelve months of operation. However, on the final questionnaire, all Councils rated this as a high priority for future action (See Table 19). The principal of School C also indicated that a review process would provide the Council with an indication on how effective it was operating and also allow it to modify its operations if needed (Final Questionnaire).

From this study no direct evidence can be found to support the need for a review process to help modify the Council's operations. Although literature would support such possible action it was not evident within the longitudinal study. All

three Councils identified the need for this and rated it as a high priority for future action.

School Council Future.

The large majority of members from both Schools A and B were not positive about the future of their Council. Some believed that the operations of Councils would not make any difference to what occurs within schools. This attitude stemmed from an assessment on how effective they believed their current School Council to be. The principals of both schools had identified this concern and discussed a number of possible actions including increasing its profile, developing greater shared decision making, having a more formalised role and gaining the necessary support and assistance to help them in their endeavours.

In contrast, all Council members from School C were very positive about its future. Its operations only formalised what already existed, that is, input from parents and staff. The Council provided the opportunity for the school community to have greater self-management and input into their school's future.

On the final questionnaire, all three Councils rated, as a high priority, the need for members to be positive about the Council's future (See Table 19). From this study it can be tentatively inferred that the long-term success of School Councils is enhanced when the members are positive about the future of Councils and when members are willing to explore future operations and possibilities.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the data described in Chapter 6. It has drawn out the properties and dimensions that emerged from the data and interpreted them first against the identified theoretical constructs within the broad frameworks that guided the study and then explored any additional tentative conceptual understandings that emerged from the research. Finally, data were analysed against the focus questions established through the literature and pilot study. The final

questionnaire provided the opportunity to support possible future criteria to help Councils become more effective.

The theoretical background discussed in Chapter Three acknowledged the complexity of effecting change and the importance of educational leadership in educational institutions. It was evident from the literature that the implementation of any innovation in an educational setting could be fraught with problems that could limit the effectiveness of the implementation. The data analysis has confirmed the importance of elements of the change process and leadership dimensions in the successful implementation of School Councils.

The data analysed within this chapter have implications for proposed criteria to assist schools wishing to introduce or review School Councils. The next chapter will outline a summary of the key findings from the study and discuss implications of the research, which may assist with the future development of School Councils.

CHAPTER 8: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

In the previous chapter, the properties and dimensions that emerged from the data were interpreted against the broad theoretical frameworks and the focus questions that guided this study. This chapter provides a summary of the research and its conclusions as well as an overview of the recommendations that emerge from it.

8.1 Research Summary

8.1.1 Concerns of the Study

It has been determined that School Councils will play an important role as schools in Queensland become increasingly involved in school-based management. Councils in Queensland are still only in their very early stages and there exists very little research into their operations.

This study represented an in-depth study of the implementation of Councils in three Queensland state primary schools. The ultimate goal of the study was the identification of theoretical understandings and criteria that would assist in the development of more effective School Councils.

This research focused on the practical implementation of newly formed School Councils and investigated what makes a Council effective or more effective. This goal was approached through an extensive literature review exploring the theoretical, research and policy developments in relation to school-based management and School Councils, a pilot study and an in-depth longitudinal study.

The literature review provided a comprehensive overview of the nature of school-based management, the development of School Councils and their nature in Queensland. As a result of the literature review, two theoretical frameworks were established which underpinned the research study. These frameworks were based on the concepts of change theory and leadership theory.

Six focus areas were identified through the literature and the pilot study and formed the basis of the investigation into the three schools with the hope that they could assist in the development of criteria for the implementation of an effective School Council. The focus areas were:

1. promoting the profile of the School Council within the school community;
2. developing well defined roles, responsibilities and functions of the Council;
3. developing roles and relationships of Council members;
4. promoting accountability, monitoring and reporting responsibilities;
5. providing training and professional development for Council members; and
6. improving the functioning and operations of the Council.

8.1.2 Research Methodology

The research study aimed to further the knowledge and understanding of the operation of School Councils in Queensland state primary schools. As Councils are relatively new decision-making bodies in Queensland there existed little research studying the effectiveness of their operations. Their implementation has the potential to affect the whole school environment and the many stakeholders within the school context. It was argued, therefore, that the study required an in-depth investigation of the Councils, their development and context. It was considered appropriate to use a case study methodology within the qualitative paradigm where a more holistic approach is emphasised. A multi-site case study approach was undertaken to allow cross-site comparison, but at the same time not foregoing the in-depth description of each site. It was hoped that this would strengthen the study's capacity for analytical generalisations to be formed and for the identification of criteria for use in other settings.

8.1.3 Conduct of the Research

The longitudinal case study was undertaken concurrently within three schools identified as having newly formed School Councils. The three schools involved in the study varied in nature and size. The study focused on the development of the Councils over a twelve-month period. All members of each of the three School Councils were involved in the study.

Data were collected using questionnaires, interviews, document analysis and observations of meetings within five distinct stages spread over a twelve-month timeframe. The data were then collated into various tables and lists to provide a rich description for each particular case site.

Analysis and interpretation of data were carried out against the established theoretical frameworks of change theory and leadership theory and under the key research focus areas.

8.2 Key Findings

The key findings from the study have been presented firstly under the two theoretical frameworks, which guided the study: change theory and leadership theory. Additional tentative conceptual understandings that emerged from the study are identified and finally criteria for Councils are identified under the six key focus areas within the study. The researcher recognises that all findings are based on research within only three schools and the certainty of findings can not be assumed and are open to further investigation in future studies.

8.3 Theoretical Frameworks

8.3.1 Change Theory

Seven key findings were identified from the study within the theoretical framework of change theory:

1. schools are at various stages of readiness for the introduction of School Councils and the extent of readiness may be a key determinant of the Council's success;
2. the level of support and acceptance for Councils varies considerably and this may be affected by the manner in which change is imposed or introduced;
3. where a culture of shared decision making and stakeholder involvement already exists there seems to be a greater chance for success when Councils are introduced;
4. for any change such as School Councils to be effective, ownership by those affected by the change would be beneficial;
5. appropriate pressure, support and training may be necessary for the successful implementation of Councils;
6. varying degrees of fear and rejection seem to be evidenced when change such as a School Council is adopted within a school community; and
7. a paradigm shift may be necessary for a new practice or innovation such as Councils to be truly institutionalised.

8.3.2 Leadership Theory

Five key findings were identified from the study within the theoretical framework of leadership theory. These theoretical understandings also impacted to some extent on each of the three School Councils and their development:

1. the role of the principal appeared to be crucial to the introduction of School Councils;
2. a possible danger exists if the principal over dominates the operations of Councils;
3. the leadership style of the principal may affect the successful operations of Councils, with a democratic and collaborative style seeming to be the most appropriate;

4. the successful implementation of shared leadership and decision making within Councils may require a change in the traditional roles of principals, teachers and parents through the empowerment of Council members to further enhance leadership density; and
5. working collegially and team cohesion appear to be necessary elements for School Councils to be successful.

8.4 Tentative Conceptual Understandings

Within the change and leadership frameworks, six tentative conceptual understandings also emerged from the study:

Change Theory.

1. the school's context would appear to influence the level of support for the success of the School Council; and
2. key characteristics of the 'Open' model of organisation may assist the successful implementation of School Councils.

Leadership Theory.

1. a distinction between the terms 'strategic' and 'operational' may need to be clearly made to enable Councils to further understand their roles;
2. both the history of participative decision making and the stability of the school principal within the school context may influence the successful implementation of the Council;
3. a genuine partnership between the principal and Council members may diminish the possibility of members becoming 'puppets on a string' controlled by the principal; and
4. to effectively implement innovations such as Councils, principals may require certain styles of leadership and be able to move between existing styles when the need arises.

8.5 Recommended Criteria for School Councils

One of the aims of this study was to develop criteria that may assist schools develop a more effective School Council especially in their developmental stages. The following criteria have been identified through the main components of this study - the literature review, the pilot study and the longitudinal study - and are informed by the theoretical analyses conducted. Some of these criteria were developed from an analysis of the successes of the Councils. Other criteria were formulated from the view of participants in this study with regard to current operational Council weaknesses. It is acknowledged that the recommended criteria are the views of the researcher as working conclusions from the study. Other criteria from more extensive studies are possible. The criteria from this study as proposed are put forward as guiding ideas for the enhancement of School Council operations. The criteria have been organised under the six identified key focus areas within the study.

Promoting the profile of the School Council within the School Community:

1. the whole school community needs to embrace the principles of school based management and be involved in democratic decision making to develop a strong sense of community support;
2. the School Council needs to be viewed positively within the school community by the parent body, school staff and the general school community; and
3. strategies need to be developed and implemented to increase the profile of the Council within the school community.

Roles and Responsibilities of the School Council:

1. the main role of the Council needs to be clearly defined and the school community needs to be aware of that role;

2. the main responsibilities of the School Council need to be clearly outlined and the school community needs to be aware of these responsibilities;
3. all relevant school and departmental documentation should be readily available to Council members to assist them in their roles; and
4. there needs to be a well-developed vision and goals for the school and its Council and all community members need to be aware of these.

The Roles and Relationships of School Council Members:

1. all members need to be clear on their overall role within the School Council as well as their individual role;
2. the formation of specific positional roles will enhance the general operations of the Council;
3. the roles of the principal and chairperson needs to be clearly defined;
4. staff and parent representatives on the Council need to be clear of their specified roles;
5. shared leadership, teamwork and positive relationships, need to be promoted and are necessary for the effective operation of Councils; and
6. Council members need to be aware of the time commitment required.

Accountability, Monitoring and Reporting:

1. the operations of the School Council should set the foundations for improved student learning outcomes;
2. the Council needs to be accountable to the whole school community and to have strategies for gathering from and reporting issues to staff, parents and the general school community;
3. the Council needs to identify its goals and achievements and work towards achieving these; and
4. Council members need to be positively committed to its operations and display confidence in its capacity to achieve its goals.

Training and Professional Development:

1. Council members need to be confident and prepared for their role through undertaking training and being provided support;
2. a formal induction program needs to be in place for all new Council members;
3. there should be a shared responsibility between school, district and state educational authorities to provide initial and ongoing training and support for School Councils; and
4. School Councils should be encouraged to become members of the Queensland Association of State School Councils incorporated (QASSCi) to access ongoing support, training and networking.

Functioning and Operations of the School Council:

1. to give School Councils clear direction, the operational procedures for Councils need to be clearly defined;
2. each Council member should have access to all relevant documentation such as a copy of the School Council Constitution and Council Handbook;
3. School Council meetings need to be scheduled regularly with a set process for developing agenda items with all members being able to have input;
4. forward planning of major activities and responsibilities should be clearly outlined to guide the Council in its operations throughout the year;
5. democratic decision making processes need to be in place to enhance shared leadership;
6. detailed minutes of each Council meeting need to be kept and provided to each Council member;
7. the School Council should be incorporated within the management structure of the school with its relationship with the school's other

decision-making bodies and the P and C Association clearly defined;
and

8. Council members need to have a positive outlook about the future of the Council and be willing to explore future operations.

8.6 Unsubstantiated Criteria

A number of areas within the identified focus questions were investigated in this study. Although aspects of the literature review may have supported such criteria, there was no direct evidence obtained from the longitudinal study of the three School Councils to substantiate their credibility. Such areas may need further exploration and research over a longer time frame to gauge whether there would be possible support for inclusion as criteria to assist the development of Councils in general. As the School Councils continue to grow and experience new demands and complexities, the following areas may become a necessary component of their operations:

1. the Council should have a formal process for monitoring its school's and its own performance;
2. the measuring of achievements would assist the Council to substantiate that it is making a difference;
3. School Councils should investigate implementing a process for reviewing and modifying the operations of Councils at regular times throughout the year;
4. a process needs to be established to allow for consensus of decision making especially when contentious issues arise;
5. the Council needs to investigate strategies to deal with any difficult situations or conflict in its general operations; and
6. the Council needs to be aware of any possible barriers that may prevent it from reaching its goals and have strategies in place to prevent such barriers.

8.7 Implications of the Research

The findings that have emerged from this study have important implications for a number of differing groups. First, the schools involved in this study will hopefully be able to benefit from the findings through being able to plan strategies to improve the overall effectiveness of their Councils. Second, it is hoped that the findings will also be relevant to and, therefore, benefit other Councils that are currently in their developmental stages or established School Councils that require a renewal process by providing a structure to allow this to happen. It is envisaged that the findings from the study may be of interest to those who are interested in the further development and enhancement of Councils within the state education system. This may include Education Queensland, the Queensland Association of State School Councils incorporated, the Queensland Teachers Union and the Queensland Parents and Citizens Association.

8.8 Directions for Further Research

Three areas of further research are possible from this study. The first involves the researcher revisiting Schools A, B and C at some future date to undertake further research to assess the progress of each Council. The study could also be extended to other schools, which have implemented a School Council. This would be particularly useful if undertaken in other education districts within Queensland. This may provide a more accurate picture of the effectiveness of School Councils. Finally, the tentative conceptual understandings, which emerged from the study, could be further investigated to gauge further support.

8.9 Conclusion

This study has almost exclusively concentrated on the internal commitment by schools themselves to Councils. It is recognised that School Councils may also be viewed at a macro level. The level of support provided by Education Queensland at both a Central Office and District Office level will influence the success and

effectiveness of Councils. It also noted that a change in government policy or new state initiatives might affect the future of School Councils. This study has been undertaken to support Councils directly at a school level. However, it may have implications as to the type of support that could be provided in the future by Education Queensland to School Councils.

Although School Councils within the Queensland education system are seen to be in their infancy, findings from this study should prove useful to schools which already have a Council in place or to those schools which are about to embark on their implementation. The trend interstate and internationally has been for School Councils to play an extremely important role in relation to school-based management and many schools in Queensland are contemplating whether to form a Council or not. Any assistance that can be provided to those schools that are commencing this process should be most helpful.

This study has endeavoured to achieve this by providing theoretical understandings and suggested criteria intrinsic to change and leadership theory to assist in the development of more effective School Councils. The proposed theoretical understandings and criteria appear to be important in shaping School Councils in their initial stages of their development. However, there are no guarantees. All School Councils will encounter unexpected future challenges as they proceed. Nevertheless, close attention to the key findings of this study will go a long way towards assisting schools to develop effective Councils which meet the needs of their school communities and enhance community involvement in school-based decision making.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Initial Questionnaire

Appendix 2: Final Questionnaire

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule Overview

Appendix 4: Observation Schedule Overview

Appendix 5: Document Analysis Schedule Overview

Appendix 6: Pilot Study Questionnaire

Appendix 1: Initial Questionnaire

School Principal's Letter

School Letter Head

Date

Dear

As part of my current Doctorate of Education studies through the University of Southern Queensland I am undertaking a Longitudinal Research Study which involves a case study of three newly formed School Councils. The purpose of the study is to analyse any theoretical understandings that may emerge and to develop possible criteria for effective School Councils and to assess how useful these criteria might be in assisting schools with the implementation of an effective School Council. This study is to be conducted over a twelve-month period commencing in Term 2, 2000. The case study contains five main planning stages. In the first stage a questionnaire will be designed to collect information to develop a descriptive profile of the School Council and its operations. In the second stage, various members of the School Council will be interviewed to seek further clarification and explanations for the data collected via the questionnaire. The third stage involves an observation of a School Council meeting to gather data to support or refute information collected through the questionnaire and interviews. The fourth stage will involve the collection and examination of agenda and other School Council documentation to support the operations of the School Council. The final stage will involve another questionnaire. Permission is hereby sought to undertake this research study at your school. It is hoped that all members of your School Council will be involved to make the data and conclusions as accurate as possible.

I am more than happy to discuss any aspects of the research study. I will make the final results of the research available to your school at the conclusion of the study. Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Yours faithfully

Randall Pointing
Principal
Merrimac State School

School Council Members Letter

School Letter Head

Date

Dear

As part of my current Doctorate of Education studies through the University of Southern Queensland I am undertaking a Longitudinal Research Study which involves a case study of three newly formed School Councils. The purpose of the study is to analyse any theoretical understandings that may emerge and to develop possible criteria for effective School Councils and to assess how useful these criteria might be in assisting schools with the implementation of an effective School Council. This study is to be conducted over a twelve-month period commencing in Term 2, 2000. The case study contains five main planning stages. In the first stage a questionnaire will be designed to collect information to develop a descriptive profile of the School Council and its operations. In the second stage, various members of the School Council will be interviewed to seek further clarification and explanations for the data collected via the questionnaire. The third stage involves observations of a number of School Council meetings to gather data to support or refute information collected through the questionnaire and interviews. The fourth stage will involve the collection and examination of agenda and other School Council documentation to support the operations of the School Council. The final stage will involve another questionnaire. Permission has been received from the Principal to undertake this research at your school. It is hoped that all members of your School Council will be involved to make the data and conclusions as accurate as possible.

I am more than happy to discuss any aspects of the research study with you. I will make the final results of the research available to your school at the conclusion of the study. Attached to this letter is the initial questionnaire for you to complete. Once completed could you please return it to your School Principal for collection? Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Yours faithfully

Randall Pointing
Principal
Merrimac State School

School Information

(To be completed by School Principal)

1. Type of school: Primary, Secondary, Special (please tick)

2. Band of school: _____

3. Total number of students: _____

4. Total number of teachers based at your school: _____

5. Total number of non-teaching staff at your school: _____

6. Number of registered members on your school's Parents and Citizens Association: _____

7. Location of school: Metropolitan , Provisional, Country, Other (please tick)

8. Please provide a short description of your school community:

9. How would you describe the level of community involvement and support within your school?

General School Council Information

(To be completed by School Principal)

1. How long has your School Council been in existence? _____

2. Why was your School Council formed?

3. How many members are on the School Council? _____

4. Please list the composition of your School Council (insert number of different members):

- School Principal
- P and C President
- Teacher Representatives
- Non Teaching Staff Representatives
- Parent Representatives
- Community Representatives
- Student Representatives

5. How did you decide on the composition of your School Council?

6. How often does your School Council plan to meet?

7. Where do you plan to hold your School Council meetings?

8. What previous methods of staff and community involvement in decision making existed within the school before the School Council was formed?

School Council Members

Subject Information

(To be completed by all respondents)

1. Age: 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, >50 (please tick)

2. Gender: Male, Female (please tick)

3. What position do you hold on the School Council? (Please tick)

- Principal
- P and C President
- Teacher Representative
- Non Teaching Staff Representative
- Parent Representative
- Community Representative
- Student Representative

4. Have you had any previous experience with School Councils?

Yes No

If yes, please provide details:

5. How long have you been at your present school? _____

6. Please explain why you became involved in the School Council:

General Survey

(All respondents to complete this section)

Profile of School Council:

1. School Councils are relatively new decision making bodies, which rely on greater participation by parents and staff in school decision making. How would you rate your school community's readiness for a School Council? (Please tick along the scale)



Extremely
Low
Readiness

Extremely
High
Readiness

Please provide further details:

2. How do you believe the School Council is viewed within the School Community?

By the parent body:

By the school staff:

By the general school community:

3. How is the profile of the School Council promoted within the school community?

Roles and Responsibilities of the School Council:

1. How clearly defined is the role of your School Council? (Please tick along the scale)



Extremely
Poorly
Defined

Extremely
Clearly
Defined

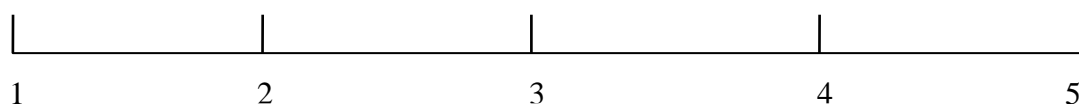
2. What do you believe is the overall main role of your School Council?

3. Do you believe the school community is aware of the main role of the School Council?

Yes, No, Undecided

Please explain further:

4. How clearly defined are the responsibilities of your School Council? (Please tick along the scale)



Extremely
Poorly
Defined

Extremely
Clearly
Defined

5. List specifically what you believe are the main responsibilities of your School Council?

6. Do you believe the school community is aware of the responsibilities of the School Council?

Yes, No, Undecided

Please explain further:

7. List relevant school documents to which you have access to assist you in your role:

8. After twelve months of operation what are the main achievements you wish your School Council to achieve?

5. What role do you believe the School Council President should play on the School Council?

6. Do you believe there should be shared leadership among all members of the School Council?

Yes, No, Undecided

Please explain further:

7. How do you believe shared leadership can be developed within the School Council?

8. What do you believe are the main roles of the School Council staff representatives?

9. What do you believe are the main roles of the School Council parent representatives?

10. Please outline how much time commitment do you think you need to give to the operations of your School Council?

11. Do you believe positive relationships will assist in the performance of the School Council?

Yes, No, Undecided

Please explain further:

12. How do believe positive relationships can be developed within the School Council?

13. Do you believe teamwork will assist in the performance of the School Council?

Yes, No, Undecided

Please explain further:

14. How do believe teamwork can be developed within the School Council?

Accountability, Monitoring and Reporting:

1. Do you believe the operations of your School Council will improve student learning outcomes at your school?

Yes, No, Undecided

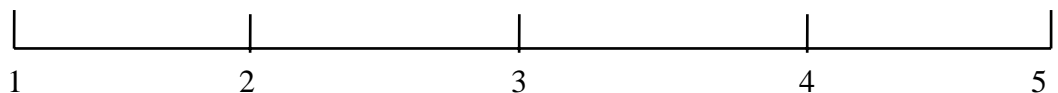
How do you think this will be achieved?

2. Does your School Council have a process for monitoring the school's performance?

Yes, No, Unsure

Please explain further:

3. With a greater emphasis on school based decision making, greater accountability is also being placed on schools. How accountable do you believe your School Council should be to the school community? (Please tick along the scale)



Extremely
Not
Accountable

Extremely
Accountable

Please explain further:

4. How does your School Council intend to gather issues from (a) staff, (b) parents and (c) the general school community?

(a) Staff:

(b) Parents:

(c) The General School Community:

5. How does your School Council intend to report back to (a) staff, (b) parents and (c) the general school community?

(a) Staff:

(b) Parents:

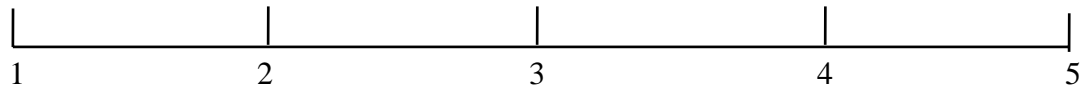
(c) The General School Community:

6. Does your School Council have a process for measuring its achievements?

Yes, No, Undecided

Please explain further:

7. How effective do you believe your School Council will be in achieving its goals?
(Please tick along the scale)



Extremely
Ineffective

Extremely
Effective

Please explain further:

8. Do you believe your School Council will make a difference to your school's operations? (Please tick along the scale)



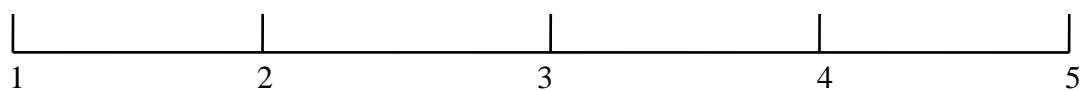
Extremely
Unlikely To Make
A Difference

Extremely
Likely To Make
A Difference

Please explain further:

Training and Professional Development

1. How confident are you in being prepared for your role on the School Council?



Extremely
Not Confident

Extremely
Confident

Please explain further:

2. Please outline any (a) support you have received and (b) training you have undertaken in preparing you for your role on the School Council.

(a) Support:

(b) Training:

3. What types of (a) support and (b) training do you believe would assist you in your role on the School Council?

(a) Support:

(b) Training:

Functioning and Operations of School Council

1. How clear are you on the operational procedures of your School Council?



Extremely
Unclear

Extremely
Clear

Please explain further:

2. Are School Council meetings scheduled regularly?

Yes, No, Don't Know

Please explain further:

3. How are agenda items developed?

4. Are democratic decision-making processes in place?

Yes, No, Undecided

Please explain further:

5. How is consensus to be reached in decision making within your School Council?

6. Are detailed minutes of School Council meetings kept?

Yes, No, Don't Know

Please explain further:

7. How does your School Council plan to deal with any conflict situations in its general operations?

8. What, if anything, will prevent the School Council from reaching its achievements? (identify possible barriers to success of School Council)

9. Does your School Council clearly fit within the management structure within your school?

Yes, No, Undecided

Please explain further:

10. How does your School Council relate to school decision making bodies such as (a) the P and C Association, (b) staff meetings, (c) administration meetings and (d) any other decision making bodies?

(a) P and C Association:

(b) Staff Meetings:

(c) Administration Meetings:

(d) Other Decision Making Bodies:

Appendix 2: Final Questionnaire

Developing Criteria for an Effective School Council

Proposed definition of an effective School Council:

The main purpose of a School Council is to improve the overall school environment to allow for greater improvements in student learning outcomes. This will result from a collaborative effort by all stakeholders.

Do you agree with this definition of an effective School Council?

Yes or No (please circle)

Please make comment:

What contributes to an effective School Council?

Please rate the following statements as to their importance in developing an effective School Council. (High (H), Medium (M) or Low (L) Priority)

- ___ Promoting the profile of School Council within the school community
- ___ Developing well defined roles, responsibilities and functions of the School Council
- ___ Developing roles and relationships of School Council Members
- ___ Promoting accountability, monitoring and reporting responsibilities
- ___ Providing training and professional development for all School Council members
- ___ Improving the functioning and operations of the School Council

Please make any additional comments:

Criteria for an Effective School Council

Each of the previous statements has been broken down into identified criteria for developing an effective School Council. Please rate each of the criteria as to their importance in developing an effective School Council. (High (H), Medium (M) or Low (L) Priority). A space is provided at the end of each criteria group to add to the list of criteria or to make any additional comments.

Promoting the profile of School Council within the school community:

- _____ A school's readiness for a School Council is an important factor.
- _____ The School Council is viewed positively within the school community by the parent body.
- _____ The School Council is viewed positively within the school community by the school staff.
- _____ The School Council is viewed positively within the school community by general community.
- _____ The profile of the School Council is promoted within the whole school community.

Please list any other important criteria in promoting the profile of the School Council.

Developing well defined roles, responsibilities and functions of the School Council:

- ____ The main role of School Council is clearly defined.
- ____ The main responsibilities of School Council are clearly outlined.
- ____ There is a well-developed and clear vision for the school.
- ____ Belief statements/goals have been clearly formulated and defined for the school.
- ____ All School Council members are aware of the school's belief statements/goals.
- ____ The school community is aware of the school's belief statements/goals.
- ____ All relevant school documents are available to School Council members to assist them in their roles.

Please list any other important criteria in assisting to help define roles, responsibilities and functions of the School Council.

Developing roles and relationships of School Council members:

- ___ All School Council members are clear on their overall role and function within the School Council.
- ___ All School Council members are clear on their individual role on the School Council.
- ___ Specific roles have been determined for various School Council members (eg. the staff and parent representatives, School Council chairperson, principal, public relations officer, minutes secretary, etc).
- ___ The role of the Principal on the School Council is clearly defined.
- ___ The role of the School Council Chairperson is clearly defined.
- ___ Shared leadership is promoted among all members of the School Council.
- ___ Strategies are in place to develop shared leadership within the School Council.
- ___ The main roles of the School Council staff and parent representatives are clearly defined.
- ___ School Council members are aware of the time commitment required to be on the School Council.
- ___ Teamwork is developed and encouraged within the School Council.
- ___ Positive relationships are fostered within the School Council.

Please list any other important criteria in assisting to develop roles and relationships of School Council members.

Promoting accountability, monitoring and reporting responsibilities:

- ___ There is a process for determining how effective the School Council will be in undertaking its role.
- ___ There are measures in place to substantiate that the School Council has made a difference to the operations of the school.
- ___ The School Council has a process for monitoring the school's performance.
- ___ The School Council is accountable to the school community.
- ___ The School Council has strategies to gather data and issues from staff, parents and the general school community.
- ___ The School Council has a process to report back to the school staff, parents and community.
- ___ The operations of the School Council will endeavour to improve student learning outcomes at the school.

Please list any other important criteria in promoting accountability, monitoring and reporting responsibilities within the School Council.

Providing training and professional development:

____ All School Council members are confident in being prepared for their role on the School Council.

____ Support or training has been undertaken in preparing School Council members for their role on the School Council.

____ An induction process is undertaken for all new School Council members.

Please list any other important criteria in providing training and professional development for all members of the School Council.

Improving the functioning and operations of the School Council:

- ___ The operational procedures of the School Council are clearly defined.
- ___ Each member of the Council has a School Council handbook.
- ___ Each member of the Council has a copy of the School Council Constitution.
- ___ School Council meetings are scheduled regularly.
- ___ There is a set method for developing agenda items.
- ___ A timeline of major responsibilities has been developed for a twelve month period.
- ___ Democratic decision-making processes are in place.
- ___ There is a process for achieving consensus in decision making within the School Council.
- ___ Detailed minutes of Council meetings are kept and circulated to all School Council members.
- ___ There are strategies for the School Council to deal with any difficulties or conflict situations in its general operations.
- ___ The Council attempts to identify any barriers that may prevent the School Council from reaching its goals and achievements.
- ___ The School Council clearly fits within the management structure within the school.
- ___ The relationship between the operations of the School Council and the school's P and C Association is clearly defined.
- ___ The relationship between the operations of the School Council and the school's other decision-making bodies (e.g. staff meetings, Administration meetings, etc) is clearly defined.
- ___ There is a process in place for reviewing and modifying the operations of the School Council at regular times throughout the year.
- ___ The Council members feel positive about the future of the School Council.
- ___ The Council members have explored future operations of the School Council and possible expanded future roles and responsibilities.

Please list any other important criteria in improving the functioning and operations of the School Council.

Appendix 3: Interview Schedule Overview

(October 2000)

School A: To refer to Interview Schedule A - Researcher's notes

Interview Schedule A1	Principal
Interview Schedule A2	School Council Chairperson
Interview Schedule A3	Teacher Representative on Council
Interview Schedule A4	Parent Representative on Council

School B: To refer to Interview Schedule B - Researcher's notes

Interview Schedule B1	Principal
Interview Schedule B2	School Council Chairperson
Interview Schedule B3	Teacher Representative on Council
Interview Schedule B4	Parent Representative on Council

School C: To refer to Interview Schedule C - Researcher's notes

Interview Schedule C1	Principal
Interview Schedule C2	School Council Chairperson
Interview Schedule C3	Teacher Representative on Council
Interview Schedule C4	Parent Representative on Council

Appendix 4: Observation Schedule Overview

(Between October 2000 and April 2001)

School A: To refer to Observation Schedule A - Researcher's notes

Observation of School Council meeting - November 2000

School B: To refer to Observation Schedule B - Researcher's notes

Observation of School Council meeting - March 2001

School C: To refer to Observation Schedule C - Researcher's notes

Observation of School Council meeting - February 2001

Appendix 5: Document Analysis Schedule Overview

(May 2001)

School A: To refer to Document Analysis Schedule A - Researcher's notes

1. Meeting agendas;
2. Minutes of various meetings (some meeting minutes missing and not provided);
3. Annual Operational Plan;
4. School Annual Report.

School B: To refer to Document Analysis Schedule B - Researcher's notes

1. Meeting agendas;
2. Minutes of various meetings;
3. Annual Operational Plan;
4. School Annual Report.

School C: To refer to Document Analysis Schedule C - Researcher's notes

1. Meeting agendas;
2. Minutes of various meetings;
3. Annual Operational Plan;
4. School Annual Report;
5. Council constitution;
6. School profile;
7. Newsletters containing relevant School Council information;
8. Council handbook.

Appendix 6: Pilot Study Questionnaire

School Letter Head

Date

Dear

As part of my current Doctorate of Education studies through the University of Southern Queensland I am undertaking a Pilot Research Study which involves a case study of a particular area of interest. Under school-based management a School Council will play an important role within the school in the decision-making process and also influence the operations of the school. For this study I have decided to explore the operations and effectiveness of the School Council at your school. The research will involve each member of the School Council completing a survey. Permission has been received from the principal to undertake this research at your school. Your involvement is entirely voluntary but it is hoped that all members will respond to make the data and conclusions as accurate as possible. The survey will take approximately 30 minutes to complete. It involves both short answer responses as well as the opportunity to expand on these to provide further opinions and comments.

I am more than happy to discuss any aspects of the survey or the actual research. I will make the results of the survey available to the school at the conclusion of the study. Thankyou for your support and cooperation.

Yours faithfully

Randall Pointing
Principal
Merrimac State School

School Information

(to be completed by School Principal)

1. Type of School: Primary, Secondary, Special (please tick)

2. Band of School: _____

3. Total number of Students: _____

4. Total number of teachers based at your school: _____

5. Total number of non teaching staff at your school: _____

6. Number of registered members on your School's Parents and Citizens Association: _____

7. Location of School: Metropolitan , Provisional, Country, Other (please tick)

8. Please provide a short description of your school community:

9. How would you describe the level of community involvement and support within your school?

General School Council Information

(to be completed by School Principal and School Council President

Principal, School Council President (please tick)

1. How long has your School Council been in existence? _____

2. Why was your School Council formed?

3. How many members are on the School Council? _____

4. Please list the composition of your School Council (insert number of different members):

- School Principal
- P and C President
- Teacher Representatives
- Non Teaching Staff Representatives
- Parent Representatives
- Community Representatives
- Student Representatives

5. How often does your School Council meet?

6. What previous methods of staff and community involvement in decision making existed within the school before the School Council was formed?

7. What role do you have within the School Council?

Subject Information

(to be completed by all respondents)

1. Age: 21-30, 31-40, 41-50, >50 (please tick)

2. Gender: Male, Female (please tick)

3. What position do you hold on the School Council? (please tick)

- Principal
- P and C President
- Teacher Representative
- Non Teaching Staff Representative
- Parent Representative
- Community Representative
- Student Representative

4. How long have you been on the School Council? (please tick)

- < 1 year
- 1 - 2 years
- 2 - 3 years
- > 3 years

5. How long have you been at your present school? _____

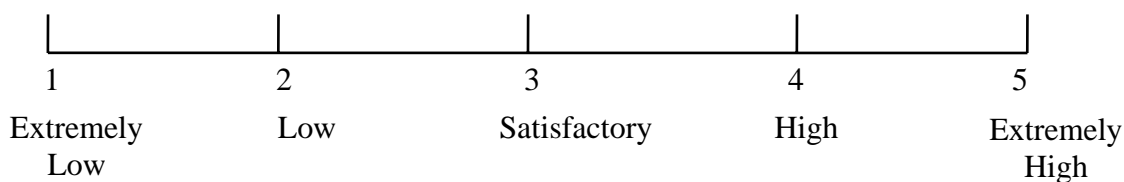
6. Please explain why you became involved in the School Council:

General Survey

(all respondents to complete this section)

1. What do you believe is the overall main role of your School Council?

2. How effective do you feel your School Council has been in undertaking this role? (please tick along the scale)



3. Has your School Council made a difference to your school's operations? (please tick)

Yes, No, Undecided

Please explain further :

4. List the main achievements of your School Council?

5. Do you believe that these achievements will help to improve student learning outcomes at your school?

Yes, No, Undecided

Please explain further:

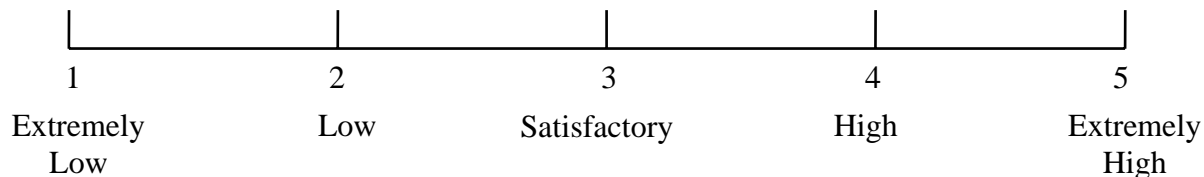
6. List specifically the main responsibilities of your School Council?

7. Does your School Council have a process for monitoring the school's performance? (please tick)

Yes, No, Unsure

Please explain further:

8. With a greater emphasis on school based decision making, greater accountability is also being placed on schools. How accountable is your School Council to the school community? (please tick along the scale)



9. How does your School Council gather data and issues from staff, parents and the general school community?

10. Does your School Council report back to the school staff and community? (please tick)

Yes, No, Uncertain

Please comment:

14. How is consensus reached in decision making within your School Council?

15. What role does the Principal play on the School Council?

16. What role does the School President play on the School Council?

17. What is your individual role on the School Council?

18. Explain what is the time commitment you give to your School Council?

19. Please outline any support or training you have undertaken in preparing you for your role on the School Council.

20. Who is responsible for the majority of agenda items for School Council meetings?

21. Who is the most influential person on your School Council?

Why do you believe this?

22. Do you feel the roles and responsibilities of the School Council could be increased? (please tick)

Yes, No, Undecided

Please explain your response:

23. What, if anything, is preventing or holding back the School Council from achieving any of its goals?

24. What do you believe is the future of School Councils in Queensland Schools?
