DYNAMIC HARMONIZATION
IN A SCHOOL Restructuring ENDEAVOUR

A Thesis Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of Educational Administration
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

By
Jayne Lamunda Hudson
Fall 1997

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SUMMARY OF DISSERTATION
Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the

DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
by
Jayne Lamunda Hudson
Department of Educational Administration
College of Education
University of Saskatchewan

Fall 1997

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DYNAMIC HARMONIZATION

IN A SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING ENDEAVOUR

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the use of dynamic harmonization, a new decision making process, as a means for implementing a second-order change in a school setting. Dynamic harmonization (DH), as conceptualized, consisted of authentic consensus and shared decision making. The components of authentic consensus were cooperation, a sense of the meeting, leadership by consensus, dissent, and dialogue. The elements of shared decision making were collaboration, collegiality, empowerment, shared leadership and the use of win/win strategies. DH encompassed all of the attributes that are promoted as being pivotal for building schools as community so that improved education for students can be the result.

A participatory action research (PAR) design was used since the aim of this research was to produce knowledge and action useful to a school staff and to empower them through construction of their own knowledge. PAR offered an approach which accommodated the intense involvement of the staff and the researcher in a setting most conducive to studying decision making and its affect on change implementation.

Twenty-two staff members in an inner-city elementary school participated in this study that involved the use of participant observation, reflective meetings, interviews with participating staff members, artifact collection, and personal reflective journals. As well, field notes, journals writing, and tape recordings were used
to chronicle each of these activities over the six-month period of the study. The study activities used the cycle of plan-act-observe-reflect-plan again.

The school staff's use of DH was examined by looking at the way in which it produced change in the individual and the culture of the group. A set of indicators was used to ascertain the use of DH in the school.

The results of the study showed that the staff believed DH encouraged the development of a high level of trust and became an effective process for implementing change at the school. Moreover, DH was a process that not only promoted an effective way to make decisions, but also offered staff a forum that encouraged learning a new way of communicating and that nurtured an appreciation for the importance of collaboration, collegiality, empowerment, and cooperation. Through the process the staff began to understand and value dissenting voices, use win/win strategies, and come to collective agreement. Leadership became a joint venture in which everyone shared ownership of and responsibility for the decisions made and the directions chosen.

The consociates reported the belief that DH had helped and was continuing to help them implement their chosen change initiatives. They felt that DH helped them find solutions to problems and to work through the day-to-day reality of instituting change.

While this study raises many questions about implementing change, decision making, the use of consensus, and the effects of synergy, it opens the door for anyone who wishes to extend their knowledge about people, the way they communicate, and the importance of valuing others.

This study concluded with several noteworthy reflections. DH made the life of the staff better, personally and professionally; "things" were better, more reasonable, coherent, just, humane, and satisfying. In this study the staff lived the reality of the
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ABSTRACT

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This study concluded with several noteworthy reflections. DH made the life of the staff better, personally and professionally; “things” were better, more reasonable, coherent, just, humane, and satisfying. In this study the staff lived the reality of the importance of developing trusting relationships, reinforced the significance of leadership style, developed an appreciation for acknowledging differences, and gained new perspectives about themselves and each other. Because of the complexity of decision making the staff came to the understanding that learning a new way to make decisions meant having to learn a new way of being.
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Praises to Inkonze School staff. Without your support and professional attitude this adventure would never have gone so well. Your willingness to give of your time and energy is awe inspiring. Thanks for trusting me and accepting me as part of your family.

A special recognition to the Dr. Stirling McDowell Foundation for the grant award. Being able to provide release time for the staff was a vital aspect of this study.

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CHAPTER ONE
THE PROBLEM

Decision making is an integral part of life. While the decisions that we make give direction to all aspects of our lives, they dramatically impact the personal and professional areas of our world when fundamental changes are being instigated. The need to make effective decisions can be seen clearly in school restructuring endeavours.

Rapid, continuous change is a reality in today's society. Our response to change is frequently negative. The reaction of many individuals in numerous organizations is "the more things change the more they stay the same." While this attitude is pervasive in many organizations it seems especially endemic in education. Even though educators today acknowledge the need for change at all levels of the educational system, they are confounded by the lack of success of many restructuring attempts (Fullan, 1992; Hawley, 1988; Glickman, 1990). Fullan (1991), stating one of the reasons why educators seem to be reluctant to change even if that change appears to be a "good" one, says, "One of the most fundamental problems in education today is that people do not have a clear, coherent sense of meaning about what education change is for, what it is, and how it proceeds" (p. 4). The crux of the problem is learning how to implement change so that students' education can be improved. Successful change implementation involves each individual becoming an integral part of the process and promoting the restructuring initiative. Having a meaningful role in the decision making process is a vital part of the implementation process.
This study was designed to ascertain if "dynamic harmonization," a new decision making process, could help a school staff implement a change initiative and become an active contributor in the endeavour. Dynamic harmonization was considered "new" in that it was a synthesis of many ideas that others have introduced.

**Background to the Problem**

Although the components of change are often discussed, examples of productive, effective, meaningful change are few (Allen & Glickman, 1992; Barth, 1990; Fullan, 1993). If so much is known about change, why is successful change implementation so elusive? Why is the restructuring movement not supported on all fronts? What is so difficult about change? The answer to each of these questions appears to involve the actions, reactions, and interactions of the participants.

Individuals involved in a change process bring their own agendas, problems, concerns, and ideas. In other words, group dynamics seem to play a pivotal role in a change venture. Without individuals “buying into” the change attempt, the plans are difficult, if not impossible to implement. Mitchell (1995), in reporting an attempted change implementation in one school system, states:

>> Many teachers “closed their doors” to the program. Other teachers paid “lip services” to the requirements and used their time with me to “get the administrators off their backs.” Although most teachers went through the process of planning for implementation, many of them made no real changes to their practices or to their attitudes about teaching. (p. 3)

As well, Muncey and McQuillan (1993, p. 487) found that, in many of the schools they studied, a significant problem was the lack of consensus on the fundamental question of whether or not change was needed. The crucial aspect of teachers' attitude toward and commitment to change is pivotal in whether or not change happens in a school.
The lack of effective communication is often seen as a fundamental element in failed change endeavours (Fullan, 1993; Lieberman, 1986; Maeroff, 1988). In fact, communication is essential to all human endeavours (Habermas, 1973). As a result of the preliminary examination of the literature concerning the elements that are deemed to be essential for effective communication, I developed dynamic harmonization as the vehicle that could promote many of the basic elements necessary for effective group interaction.

Dynamic harmonization is a process designed to be used in making a fundamental or "second order" change. "First-order changes" are those that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of what is currently done, 'without disturbing the basic organizational features, without substantially altering the way that children and adults perform their roles'" (Fullan, 1991, p. 29). Many first-order changes can be implemented or ignored without impacting the organization profoundly. "Second-order changes seek to alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together, including new goals, structures, and roles" (p. 29). Second-order change is fundamental and therefore involves the whole organization and directly affects each individual within it. Second-order change is the one being considered here since it can make a significant difference to the organization and the participants.

The degree of success in a change endeavour appears dependent on individuals and the way in which they communicate, co-operate, and make decisions. If second-order change is desired then group interactions appears to be the area that needs to be examined.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study introduced a new way of making decisions that promotes and encourages "upside down" thinking. Dynamic harmonization, an
authentic, consensual, shared decision making process, is intended to encourage participation by all involved and to ensure that vital change is implemented. Dynamic harmonization was introduced to a school staff and together we explored the use of this concept in the world of teaching.

While consensus is a word that is defined in various ways depending on the context, for the purposes of this study it was closely aligned with that described by the Society of Friends (Quakers). For Friends, consensus connotes a cooperative effort to find a sound solution acceptable to everyone rather than a competitive struggle in which an unacceptable solution is forced on the losers (Sheeran, 1983). An essential part of the process is building trust through valuing the views of dissenters.

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the use of dynamic harmonization as a process for implementing a second-order change in a school setting.

This purpose was addressed through the following questions:

1.) What did dynamic harmonization look like in the school?
2.) How did the process of dynamic harmonization unfold in the school?
3.) How did the staff use dynamic harmonization in the group setting?
4.) What conditions affected the use of dynamic harmonization?
5.) What did the concept of dynamic harmonization come to mean to the staff?
6.) What skills did the staff develop as a result of using dynamic harmonization?
7.) Was dynamic harmonization a beneficial process in a restructuring endeavour?

Significance of the Study

This study used participatory action research to observe, analyze, and
assess dynamic harmonization (DH) as a basis for implementing a second-order change in one school.

While group dynamics and restructuring have been frequently discussed and researched topics, DH, being a new process, had not been the focus of an investigation. Therefore, there was a need to examine its use and importance in a school restructuring endeavour. The findings of this research give insight into the nature of DH and provide a picture of an approach to consensual, shared decision making. The DH process incorporates collaboration, collegiality, professionalism, shared leadership, the use of win/win strategies, cooperation, “a sense of the meeting,” “leadership by consensus,” dissent, and dialogue. DH attempts to encourage the development of community which is seen to be essential for promoting restructuring. As well, this study attempts to provide helpful information for other restructuring projects.

**Definition of Terms**

The following is a list of terms and their meanings used for the purposes of this study.

- **Dynamic harmonization**: a process that is built on shared decision making and authentic consensual decision making. This process incorporates many of the components of the Society of Friends model of decision making (Morley, 1993; Sheeran, 1983).

- **Shared decision making**: a decision making process that is an integral part of dynamic harmonization. Shared decisions means relationships are cooperative, sharing is more important than controlling, respect for differences is essential, the role of the staff is redefined, and a whole new way for staff to work together is produced (Meadows, 1992, p. 480).

- **Authentic consensus**: a foundational component of dynamic
harmonization. It is a process of arriving at agreement in which a free and open exchange of ideas occurs until agreement has been reached; a cooperative effort is made to find a sound solution acceptable to everyone rather than a competitive struggle in which an unacceptable solution is forced on the losers (Likert & Likert, 1976, p. 146).

**Ethical leadership:** a concept that connotes a leader who shows himself/herself to be trustworthy and honest, is someone who believes in people, and is principle driven.

**Participatory action research:** an attempt to understand the world as it is from a subjective perspective, from the frame of reference of a participant rather than an observer. Participatory action research (PAR) offers all participants in the work of education a flexible approach to school improvement through critically informed action and reflection that is appropriate to the real, complex and often confusing circumstances and constraints of the modern school. PAR provides, on the one hand, a framework for recognizing ideals in the reality of the work of schools' ideals-in-action, and on the other, a concrete procedure for translating evolving ideas into critically informed action and increasing the harmony between educational ideas and educational action (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p. 7).

**First-order change:** modification that improves the efficiency and effectiveness of what is currently done, without disturbing the basic organizational features, without substantially altering the way that children and adults perform their roles (Fullan, 1991, p. 29).

**Second-order change:** transformation that seeks to alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together, including new goals, structures, and roles (Fullan, 1991, p. 29).

**Restructuring endeavour:** the fundamental changes that the Inkonze staff had chosen to make were becoming a Quality School and using
family groupings rather than grade levels.

Collaboration: a process in which people talk and work together. It has a direct impact on collegiality (shared power and authority) as well as trust and also promotes the development of synergy.

Dialogue: talk that is used to promote learning, unfold shared meaning, integrate multiple meanings, and uncover and examine assumptions (Gerard & Teurfs, 1995).

Reflection: the process of critically examining personal and corporate habits, beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, and practices.

Community: an ideal state in which everyone is accepted and treated as a valuable, integral member (Jarman & Land, 1995, p. 22) and confers upon its members identity, a sense of belonging, and a measure of security (Gardner, 1995, p. 283).

Parameters of the Study

The use of participatory action research to study dynamic harmonization resulted in a number of assumptions, limitations, and delimitations.

Assumptions

Some assumptions relate to the use of dynamic harmonization and the implementation of change, while some relate to the research process. In this study, it was assumed that:

1. Change endeavours are implemented to improve education for students.
2. Staff choose their level of involvement in any change initiative.
3. A variety of conditions affect the staff’s commitment to a change endeavour.
4. Decision making is fundamental in any change endeavour.

5. Participatory action research is a valid and useful approach for studying a decision making process.

6. Participatory action research encourages the elements of collaboration, trust, and empowerment.

7. Staff's involvement in data collection and analysis is important for reflection and reframing.

8. The staffs' adaptation of Glasser's (1990) Quality School concept and the use of family groupings rather than grade levels are second-order changes.

Delimitations

1. This study was delimitated to one elementary school in Saskatchewan with intensive engagement required in the research design.

2. Concentrated data collection continued for a minimum of five and a half months.

3. Only qualitative data were collected.

4. Data collection was limited to the staff as individuals and as a group, but did not include students directly.

5. The investigation was primarily related to the process of shared decision making and the results produced.

6. Participants in the study were those school staff who were willing to participate in the study and me, the researcher/participant.

Limitations

1. The information collected was directly affected by the degree of involvement of the participants and the interaction between participants.

2. Because the study was conducted in one elementary school, the results are not generalizable in the traditional sense. Generalizability is best
thought of as a matter of “fit” between the situation studied and others to which one might be interested in applying the concepts and conclusions of this study.

**Organization of the Thesis**

In this chapter I have supplied a general overview of the study, including the background to the study, the research questions, the significance of the study, definition of terms, and the parameters under which the study was conducted. In Chapter 2, I furnish an in depth look at DH, an authentic, consensual, shared decision making process, and its relationship to restructuring endeavours, through a study of existing literature. Chapter 3 includes a description of the research design that was followed in this study. Chapter 4 presents a detailed description of the setting within which the study was conducted. In Chapter 5, the description and sense making of the study are presented as I address the questions of what DH looked like in the school, how DH unfolded in the school, how the staff used DH in the group setting, and what conditions affected the use of DH. Also, Chapter 5 explores the meaning of DH developed by the staff, the skills that the staff developed as a result of using DH, the utility of dynamic harmonization in a restructuring endeavour, and the surprises that unfolded as a result of the study. Chapter 6 provides a summary of the study, reflections on my role as an action researcher, and the implication of the study for educational change and further research.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Also known as "the inevitable and usually tedious chapter."
(Wolcott, 1994, p. 57)

As a teacher in a school in a small urban center I became aware of the number of supposedly life-changing restructuring initiatives that were being presented to school staffs that never made it beyond the front office. Many of these initiatives appeared to me to be worthwhile and possibly significant for the school community. I began to wonder why some staff members would get on every band wagon that came along, some staff would pick and choose which band wagons to board, and others would prefer to walk as they had always done resulting in few if any significant changes being implemented. My questioning led me to read the literature on change theory and school restructuring. I came to the conclusion that it was during the decision making process that staff made their choice about their involvement in the proposed change. It seemed that many changes that could have resulted in an improved educational system for staff and students were being ignored or rejected due to the way staff were invited or uninvited to be an integral part of the change process. As a result of this search of the literature, I devised dynamic harmonization (DH), a new decision making process, as a model that could be effective in implementing change in a school. Therefore, this study looked at the everyday life of a school staff, the way they made decisions, and the effects of this new decision making process on their world.

To understand the reasons that traditional decision making models have not been effective in implementing change and to understand my
reasons for choosing DH as a decision making process worth investigating, an overview of the environment or context in which educators have been attempting to make changes in the way students are educated is presented. Next the suggested components necessary for the implementation of change are examined. As well, an overview of the traditional decision making models is proffered. Then a explanation of the components and potential benefits of DH is given. A description of the interrelation between DH and school restructuring is included. The final section is a depiction of the techniques used in DH.

Understanding the Context

The context in which change efforts are attempted impacts greatly on the projects that are chosen, as well as on the attitudes of those affected by the proposed change. The environment in which organizations find themselves today is vastly different from the environment of the past. Understanding those differences and appreciating the potential impact they have on organizations and change endeavours are of primary importance if change projects are to be implemented successfully.

Modernity

In the recent past, the context or environment for all organizations has been grounded in modernity. Hargreaves (1994) describes modernity as “a social condition that is both driven and sustained by Enlightenment beliefs in rational scientific progress, in triumph of technology over nature, and in the capacity to control and improve the human condition by applying this wealth of scientific and technological understanding and expertise to social reform” (p. 8). Our schools have reflected the needs and understandings of this modernistic, industrial world. Rationality, efficiency, reliance on scientific
knowledge, and a consuming belief in technology are the concepts that have had an overarching influence on the development of goals and objectives in education. While the attributes of modernity have enhanced the development of science and technology, they also have caused some fundamental problems. “Modernity has always been a double-edged phenomenon. It has possessed the potential to enhance the human condition but also to impoverish it” (Hargreaves, p. 26). Modernity has in essence denied the importance of the human factor and curtailed the creative, innovative potential of individuals. As a result, Hargreaves sees this phenomenon as having a direct impact on teachers and students. “In modernistic school systems, sustaining and realizing the self has been a constant struggle for teachers, whose purposes, commitments and very desires to teach have been persistently obstructed and undermined by bureaucratic structures in which they work” (p. 30). Although society is moving out of the industrial age the effects are with us still.

**Postmodernity**

There appears to be an increase in disruption and turbulence in our world. The reality of postmodernity must be acknowledged whether one accepts a postmodern philosophy or not. Postmodernity is a social condition that consists of particular patterns of social, economic, political, and cultural relations (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 38; Mitchell, Sackney, & Walker, 1994, p. 3). This postmodern world is consumed with paradoxes. “It is a world of fragmentation and disintegration -- and yet of wholeness and independence; a world of chaos and uncertainty -- and yet symmetry and pattern; a world of multiplicity and complexity -- and yet connection and elegant simplicity” (Mitchell et al., pp. 5-6). In attempting to come to terms with what postmodernism is and what it means, Lather (1991, p. 164) quotes W.B.
Yeats:

\textit{Turning and turning in the widening gyro}
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;...

Educators living a modern life in a postmodern world must wonder where the centre is. Handy’s (1990) label “the age of unreason” is an apt one in that the rules of modernity no longer hold. The organization that will prosper in this new age is very different from the traditional one.

The kinds of organizations most likely to prosper in the postindustrial, postmodern world, it is widely argued, are the ones characterized by flexibility, adaptability, creativity, opportunism, collaboration, continuous improvement, a positive orientation towards problem-solving and commitment to maximizing their capacity to learn about their environment and themselves. In this respect, inbuilt innovativeness and routine unpredictability are the organizational oxymorons of postmodernity. (Hargreaves, p. 63)

The stability and predictability of the industrial era are gone. Those attributes have been replaced by flexibility and unpredictability.

Attempting to restructure education means coming to an understanding and appreciation of the world as it is today. No amount of wishing for the past or attempting to live in the past will produce the education imperatives that are called for in a postmodern world. In fact, many writers see this problem as the fundamental one facing educational reformers today (e.g., Schlechty, 1990; Hargreaves, 1994; Sarason, 1990). Schlechty underlines the essence of this concern, “The present school structure grew out of a set of assumptions about the purpose of schooling that is inconsistent with emerging social and economic realities” (p. xviii). Even the images of organizations highlight the difference in what successful organizations were yesterday and what they are today. Hargreaves (p. 9) likens the organization of modernity to the “compartamentalized egg-crate” and the organization of postmodernity to the “moving mosaic”. Each of these ideas emphasizes the vast difference in the two worlds. As well, Sarason
writes about the intractability of schools; indicating the need to recognize where education is at present and where it needs to be.

While the assumption posited here is that education needs to change if we are to meet the needs of students living in a postmodern world, the fact is that restructuring is very difficult. Given the realities of the shift from a modern to a postmodern world, the fact that change in education has been slow, frustrating, and time consuming seems reasonable. Understanding that “today’s solutions often become tomorrow’s problems” (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 60), highlights the complex process of understanding and implementing change in the educational setting. If change is to take place then comprehending what constitutes change is a prerequisite in attempting to turn education upside-down or inside-out.

The Connection

If a second-order change is to be implemented in a school, then that school must go through a restructuring process. The efforts to instill change in schools are often unsuccessful and for many participants frustrating as well (Fullan, 1992; Glickman, 1990; Hargreaves, 1994). Before attempting to study the issues involved in restructuring, one would do well to keep in mind the words of Hargreaves (1994), “Restructuring is not an end to our problems but a beginning; a chance to set new rules for new purposes and new learnings in a newly constructed world” (p. 261).

Decision making is a pivotal part of this restructuring process. Therefore, examining the traditional ways of making decisions will provide an opportunity to ascertain whether or not these models have been effective in promoting the elements seen as fundamental for implementing effective change and will help in asserting the potential usefulness of DH. If the potential use of DH is to be evaluated then it is vital for change to be
examined and some of the concepts that are seen to be fundamental highlighted.

**Change**

Handy (1990, p. 23) believes that change means “upside-down” thinking; looking at everything in a new and different way. Fullan (1991) explains that all change is not the same. “First-order changes are those that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of what is currently done, ‘without disturbing the basic organizational features, without substantially altering the way that children and adults perform their roles’ ” (p. 29). First-order change is not the type to which Handy seems to be referring. His description fits with Fullan’s definition of second-order change. “Second-order changes seek to alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together, including new goals, structures, and roles” (p. 29). Second-order changes are the ones that are going to make a significant difference in how schools “do business”, how children learn, how teachers teach, and how schools meet the mandates of society.

Changing the way we educate children in substantial ways means making these second-order changes. If we are to make these changes successfully then we need to understand what the fundamental elements of change are.

**The Fundamentals of Change**

In order for good schools to flourish it appears that they must build community. As well, it seems essential that building school community be at the heart of school improvement.

Community is part of our nature. Given the opportunities most of us will opt for community as the metaphor for how we live our lives and how we want our students to live their lives in schools. We humans seek meaning and significance above all, and building
purposeful communities helps us to find both. (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 95)

Building community is a complex task but one that appears to be necessary if second-order change is to be implemented.

Highlighted here is the impact that a learning organization has on the change process. As well, the effect leadership has on building schools as community is emphasized. Building community is seen as vital so that improved education can meet the goal on everyone's agenda--improved education for students. The significance of trust runs throughout this discussion of the important characteristics of change. In each area, whether it be change in the general sense or change in the specific, the importance of trust is highlighted or at the very least implied. The idea postulated here is that without trust there can be no community and, therefore, no change (Kouzes & Posner, 1993; O'Toole, 1995). As the discussion unfolds, the significance of trust will become apparent. Trust is a vital component in developing a learning organization.

**Learning Organizations**

Much has been written on the need for organizational learning to take place if an organization is going to engage in momentous change (Mitchell, 1995; Kofman & Senge, 1993; Senge, 1990; Conner & Lawton, 1994). Mitchell defines organizational learning in a school setting as "the ways in which school personnel created, acquired, interpreted, shared, and applied information in order to increase their personal effectiveness and productivity in support of various school tasks" (p. 8). A learning organization as explained by Senge is an organization "that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future" and encompasses both adaptive or survival learning and generative learning that enhances the capacity to create (p. 14). Critical features of organizational learning are reflection and reframing.
Reflection is an integral feature of double loop learning that promotes organizational learning. Double loop learning “changes the governing variables of one’s programs and causes ripples of change to fan out over one’s whole system of theories-in-use” (Argyris & Schon, 1974, p. 19). Double loop learning is essential for second-order change because reflection is vital if underlying cause and effects are to be examined. Without reflection, theories of action are not revised and, until new concepts, ideas, or theories of action begin to influence behaviour, learning will not occur. Reflection leads to reframing that leads to a new understanding of the problem or issue which needs to be examined.

Reframing is the ability to see things, problems, situations, or people in other ways, to look at them sideways, or upside-down; to put them in another perspective or another context; to think of them as opportunities not problems, as hiccups rather than disasters. (Handy, 1990, p. 65)

Without the ability to see things differently, finding new solutions is impossible. If a difficult situation is viewed “sideways”, maybe it is not a difficulty after all. Senge (1990, pp. 182-86) illustrates what could be called revised thinking. The claim is made that the way one thinks about a situation has a direct impact on the way one approaches that situation. Senge (p. 27) also says that we are prisoners of our own thinking. He underscores this idea by quoting Walt Kelly’s famous line from “Pogo”: “We have met the enemy and they is us.” In order not to be the enemy in restructuring endeavours, we need to reflect and reframe; to think sideways.

If organizational learning with its components of reflecting and reframing is essential for bringing about fundamental change, then the role that the leader plays in this endeavour needs to be examined. The task here is to examine the attributes and actions of a leader who will promote, instigate, support, and instill second-order change.
Imperatives of Leadership

A leader who has the ability to implement change seems to be of paramount importance. Bennis (1989, pp. 45-46) describes a leader as one who innovates, is an original, develops, focuses on people, inspires trust, has a long range perspective, asks what and how, has her eye on the horizon, challenges the status quo, is her own person, and does the "right" thing. Starratt (1993, p. 17) believes, "Being a leader today involves one in a drama whose outcomes are largely unknown. A leader has to improvise on the available plots and scripts and, in many cases, rewrite the script as the drama unfolds. Leadership means being a playwright, a lead actor, a stage director, a drama critic and a director all in one." O'Toole (1995) explains, "Modern men and women no longer rely on the physical aggressiveness or strength of their leaders for survival. Instead, they depend on such traits as integrity, sense of moral purpose, and capacity to communicate" (p. 137). The success of an endeavour depends largely on the skills and beliefs of the leader. In other words, the leader is the support, the underpinning of the group that is led.

Many writers have outlined the qualities and actions of a leader who has the potential of successfully implementing change (e.g., Fullan, 1992; Leithwood, 1994; Hargreaves, 1994). Fullan (pp. 84-85) lists eight guidelines for leadership action. These actions include understanding the culture of the organization; valuing the employees and co-workers; extending what is valued; expressing what is valued; promoting collaboration; making menus, not mandates; using bureaucratic measures to facilitate, not constrain; and connecting with the wider environment. Each of these actions must be grounded in a basic belief in the goals of the organization and a basic caring for those connected to the organization. "Second-order changes require a form of leadership that is sensitive to organization building: developing shared vision,
creating productive cultures, distributing leadership to others, and the like” (Leithwood, p. 501). Hargreaves (p. 241) insists that a leader has the mandate to go beyond collaboration by redefining the rules, responsibilities, and relationships for everyone.

While each of the ideas presented seem to be valid, the essential requirement is that the leader be ethical (O'Toole, 1995; Kouzes & Posner, 1993). In order for the leader to give guidance during the complex process of change, the leader needs to be totally trustworthy and therefore worthy of followership. The issues that are vital to restructuring in an educational setting require an ethical leader so that all participants can truly believe what the leader says, can accept and support the leader’s actions, and can trust that leader’s motivation.

The quality of ethical leadership that appears to impact on restructuring most profoundly is the way in which the ethical leader affects the followership. While what a leader does impacts directly on followers’ desire to follow, what a leader is equally influences the leadership/followership relationship. There are some fundamental attributes a leader must have if the followership is to be committed to that leader’s vision. Kouzes and Posner (1993) detail two of these by explaining the importance of honesty and trustworthiness.

Honesty is absolutely essential to leadership if people are going to follow someone willingly... they first want to assure themselves that the person is worthy of their trust. They want to know that the would be leader is truthful and ethical. (p. 14).

Constituents are willing to follow leaders who have their best interest at heart and are ever mindful of their hopes and dreams (Kouzes and Posner, p. xxiii). Change is not likely to happen if followers are unwilling to follow the leader.

Transformational leaders are often cited as those who make a difference in restructuring ventures (Tichy & Devanna, 1986; Bennis, 1989; Quantz, Rogers, & Dantley, 1994). The qualities of an ethical leader are
similar if not identical to the qualities of a transformational leader. According to Tichy and Devanna (p. 271), transformational leaders are courageous, believe in people, and are value driven. As well, they are trustworthy and inspirational. Trust appears to be essential for transformational and ethical leaders. In fact in Bennis' view, trust is of utmost importance because it “is the underlying issue in not only getting people on your side, but having them stay there” (p. 160). He continues by listing the essential ingredients of trust as constancy, congruity, reliability, and integrity (p. 160). Kouzes and Posner (1993, p. 30) found that the ten most frequently used words to describe admired leaders were valued, motivated, enthusiastic, challenged, inspired, capable, supported, powerful, respected, and proud. The convictions, and therefore, the actions of the leader profoundly influence the concepts that are found in the school restructuring literature.

To say that educational change is complex is an understatement. To say that educational change requires a decision making process that has the potential for helping implement those changes is apparent. A study of the traditional decision making processes indicates that these models neither ensure nor encourage the kind of upside-down thinking and progressive leadership that is required if change initiatives are to be successfully implemented.

**Decision Making**

Decision making is a vital and pervasive aspect of life. While decision making is an integral part of our world and the decisions we make guide our every thought and action, decisions go largely unnoticed and unexamined. Decisions are made on various levels: individually, among friends, at work, in communities, and nationally. Frequently, the only decisions that are recognized and explored are the ones made for us, the ones reached in a large
group, or the ones where conflict between what we need or want and what we get arise.

Throughout this century organizational theorists have written about decision making and expressed various views concerning the essential elements of decision making processes. In order to have a clear understanding of decision making, the traditional views of decision making processes were examined using Hoy and Miskel's (1991) work as the basis. The models they present are the classical model, the administrative model, the incremental model, mixed scanning model, the garbage can model, and the Janis-Mann model. They also explored models for determining participation in and sharing of decision making.

In the classical theory the assumption is that all decisions should be completely rational and "the decision-making process is a series of sequential steps" (Hoy & Miskel, 1991, p. 300). This model is an ideal rather than an actual description of the way most decision makers function (p. 300). "Most scholars, in fact, consider the classical model an unrealistic, if not naive, ideal" (p. 300).

The administrative model uses a satisficing strategy that is considered to be a more realistic approach (Hoy & Miskel, 1991, p. 301). This strategy is based on six assumptions (pp. 301-305). The first assumption is that the decision making process is a cycle of events that includes identification and diagnosis of the difficulty, the development and initiation of a plan, and the appraisal of success. The second assumption pertains to the performance of interdependent phases having to do with perpetuation, protection, survival, and growth. The third assumption maintains that complete rationality is impossible. The idea that the function of administration is to provide all subordinates with an internal environment so that their behaviours are consistent with the organizational goals is the fourth assumption. The fifth
assumption is that the decision making process is a pattern of action found in the administration of all functional and task areas. The last assumption is that decision making occurs in the same form in most complex organizations. This model holds that “there are no ultimate solutions -- only satisfactory decisions and solutions for the moment” (p. 314). Some limitations of satisficing are seen when the alternatives are undefinable and the consequences are unpredictable (p. 314).

The incremental model uses a strategy of successive limited comparisons (Hoy & Miskel, 1991, p. 314). This model is seen as effective only when issues are complex and uncertainty and conflict are high.

This process is best described as a method of successive limited comparisons.... Only a very limited set of alternatives, similar to the existing situation, is considered by successively comparing their consequences until decision makers come to some agreement on a course of action. (p. 314)

This theory is seen as an alternative rather than a fundamental way to make decisions.

The scanning model incorporates an adaptive strategy that involves two sets of judgments (Hoy & Miskel, 1991, pp. 315-316). These judgments consist of “choices about the organization’s mission and basic policy, and then incremental decisions that move the organization in the direction prescribed by policy” (p. 316). The rules for mixed scanning are focused trial and error, tentativeness, procrastination, decision staggering, fractionalizing, betting, and reversible decisions (p. 316). “Decision making is focused on broad ends and tentative means” (p. 318).

The garbage can model is described as “a pattern or flow of multiple decisions in organizations that experience extremely high uncertainty” (Hoy & Miskel, 1991, p. 319). This model helps explain why solutions may be proposed to non-existent problems and why few problems may be solved for the basic feature is that decision making does not necessarily begin with a
problem or end with a solution (p. 20).

Because of the stress produced by pressure situations Janis and Mann developed a conflict theory of decision making (Hoy & Miskel, 1991, p. 321). "The basic idea of the model is that when confronted with a decision-making situation, reflective decision makers either consciously or unconsciously consider four issues" (p. 323). These four issues, contained in four questions are: "Are the risks serious if I don't change? Are the risks serious if I do change? Is it realistic to hope to find a better solution? Is there sufficient time to search and deliberate?" (pp. 324-25). The answers to these four questions determine whether the decision makers engage in information processing or use a less effective way of solving the problem (p. 323). The intent of this model is to avoid defective decision making.

Hoy and Miskel (1991) described two models of shared decision making based on the work of Bridges: zone of acceptance and decision making rules. These two models emphasize the importance of when to involve and when not to involve the employees in the decision making process. In the zone of acceptance, employee participation hinges on a knowledge base, competence, and whether or not the decision falls within or outside of the employee's area of acceptability. The decision model has two sets of parameters. The first set "contains three rules designed to enhance the quality of the decisions" (p. 334). The second set is "designed to enhance the acceptance of decisions by subordinates" (p. 335). Both of these models appear to have built-in biases that at times employees or "subordinates" cannot be trusted to make the best decision for the organization. The administrators are seen to be better equipped to make decisions for the good of all.

Hoy and Miskel's (1991) statement concerning the zone of acceptance model seems to be appropriate for all models of decision making.
This model for shared decision making is not a panacea. It is not a substitute for sensitive and reflective administrative thought and action; it simply provides some rough guidelines for determining when and how teachers and principals should be involved in joint decision making. The effectiveness of decisions is determined by both the quality of the decisions and the acceptance and commitment of subordinates to implement the decision. (p. 332)

If decisions are not accepted by the stakeholders and if commitment to these decisions is not forthcoming, then which model to use is a moot if not superfluous point.

Although the need for effective decisions can be seen in all organizations, the emphasis in this study was on education and in particular making decisions for school restructuring endeavours. Many writers have stressed the need for a decision making role for all members of an organization (Secretan, 1996; Brown & Isaacs, 1995). “If certain essential elements are missing from our work, such as information or opportunity to contribute to the decisions that affect the organization and therefore our own life and livelihood, our work will deprive our souls” (Secretan, p. 157). The lack of acceptance and commitment to decisions by teachers in school restructuring endeavors is a recurring concern (Hargreaves, 1994; Fullan, 1991). The traditional decision making models have not fulfilled the mandate to promote new ways of thinking and to value the input of all who are actively involved in educating students. Therefore, this study focused on a decision making model that had the potential for providing a pivotal role in the decision making process for all staff members and encouraged the forum in which upside-down thinking might be possible. The hope was that every staff member would become part of the implementation of a chosen change so that good decisions for educating students would be implemented. The type of decision making needed for making choices concerning possible changes that will enhance education for students appears to be a more complex model than often has been used.
DH is shared decision making based on authentic consensus. This model involves arriving at agreement in which a free and open exchange of ideas continues until agreement has been reached. DH is a collaborative effort to find a sound solution acceptable to everyone rather than a competitive struggle in which an unacceptable solution is forced on the losers. Relationships are cooperative, sharing is more important than controlling, and respect for differences is essential.

The importance of a revised way to make decisions is underlined by Handy (1990):

We are entering an Age of Unreason, when the future, in so many areas, is there to be shaped, by us and for us -- a time when the only prediction that holds true is that no predictions will hold true: a time, therefore, for bold imaginings in private life as well as public, for thinking the unlikely and doing the unreasonable. (p. 5)

Encouraging creative solutions to old and new problems by rethinking the way in which we make decisions appears to be a worthwhile venture.

The Lens

The literature on decision making has led me to the interpretivist school of thought because the interpretive approach focuses on “the meaning social actions have for participants. This theory emphasizes the socially constructed nature of organizational reality and the process by which participants negotiate the meanings of their actions” (Aldrich, 1992, p. 18). It would seem that decision making and the impact of the decisions could be best understood by investigating people’s actions and reactions. The interpretive view also incorporates the ambiguity view. The ambiguity view is based on the assumption that “there is no such thing as a fixed ‘culture’ in organizations” (p. 23). Aldrich says that “culture is not the island of clarity within a jungle of meaninglessness -- it is the jungle itself.... Individuals and groups continually make adjustments to the situations in which they find
themselves, and relations in organizations ultimately depend on agreement between participants” (pp. 24-25). The very words “adjustment” and “agreement” have a direct connection to decision making. In any decision making process adjustment and agreement or the lack thereof have a direct impact on the people involved.

The Framework

The core elements of DH are authentic consensus and shared decision making (Figure 1). Sharing in decisions and finding authentic consensus facilitate the development of synergy (Sheeran, 1983; Piper, 1974), promote commitment to the decision (Sergiovanni, 1984; Wynn and Guditus, 1984) and heighten trust (Schmuck, Runkel, Saturen, Martell, & Derr, 1972; Maeroff, 1988b). Although shared decision making and authentic consensus overlap, they are not congruent. It is possible to have shared decision making without authentic consensus and vice-versa.

![Dynamic Harmonization Diagram](image)

Figure 1. Dynamic harmonization’s components.

Although DH may not be necessary for all decision making, the possibilities this process has for effective decision making in the implementation of second-order change in a school setting makes this method
worth pursuing. Ineffectual decision making appears to be a primary cause for the failure to implement many creative and exciting ideas. Instilling change is a complex endeavour and unilateral, imposed decisions do not appear to meet the needs of those participants who are endeavouring to promote new ways of being.

Consequently, the view of social reality used for the purposes of this study is couched in the interpretive domain and emphasizes the importance of human understanding (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 28). Knowledge is understanding human events through human interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 10). The reality of living in the world is a way of participating in knowledge (p. 15). This study examined the actions, reactions, and interactions of the consociates and their understandings for all involved. Berger and Luckmann believe that “commonsense ‘knowledge’ rather than ‘ideas’ must be the central focus for the sociology of knowledge” (p. 15), for it is this knowledge that “constitutes the fabric of meanings without which no society could exist” (p. 15). The frame of socially constructed reality guided this study for it provides a map for “establishing where [we] are, where [we] have been and where it is possible to go” (Burrell & Morgan, p. 24).

**Dynamic Harmonization**

Dynamic harmonization, composed of authentic consensus and shared decision making, is built on and supported by trust. The relationship between trust and the essential components of authentic consensus and the elements of shared decision making is emphasized as each facet is examined. The features that comprise DH are discussed in literature having to do with organization in the general sense but the specific connection to education will be highlighted where appropriate.
**Authentic Consensus**

The term authentic consensus is used to differentiate the type of consensus used in dynamic harmonization from consensus that is often bandied about in general conversation. The importance of consensus, the various categories of consensus, and the description of authentic consensus is developed in the succeeding sections.

Discovering exactly what is meant by the use of consensus at any given time may be confusing. A key question seems to be: is consensus an important concept in the world of education? In answering this question, the potential usefulness of consensus both as a process and as an outcome is explored.

There are both effective and potentially destructive interpretations and uses of consensus as a process and an outcome. The proposition presented here is that the society we have now which operates without authentic, effective, consensual decision making is a less productive one than would be possible if consensus were used. Consensual endeavours engender decisions that promote trust, credibility, care, and concern. This process is the one that has potential for generating a more advantageous educational environment for all stakeholders (Wagner, 1993, p. 696).

**Categories of Consensus**

Consensus is considered to be a complex term (Partridge, 1971; Habermas, 1992). Partridge explains:

> Consent and consensus have been ideas both persistent and elusive: persistent, because there have been thinkers in all times who have held that there must be an element of agreement on consensus in the constitution of human society; and elusive, because these thinkers have always found it difficult to specify what the nature of consensus may be. (p. 10)

Partridge describes consent and consensus, at their lowest level, as sheer apathy, indifference or habit when “one simply acquiesces and obeys” (p. 33).
He further states, “Consensus involves either an intellectual or an emotional relation to the object which may be justly characterized as agreement.... Consensus contains at its core a positive agreement with or adherence to whatever the consensus is said to be about” (pp. 79-80). Habermas says consensus is the “ultimate agreement or final opinion” (p. 98) and goes on to explain that “the generalization of a consensus not only implies the dissolution of contradictions, but also the extinguishing of the individuality of those who are able to contradict each other -- their disappearance within a collective group” (p. 110).

The complexity of consensus has led to varied usage and interpretation. A practical approach to understanding consensus is presented by numerous writers (e.g., Sartor, 1993; Saint & Lawson, 1994; Tagliere, 1993; Connor & Lake, 1988; Schmuck et al., 1972). Sartor (p. 27), who instigated a “consensus classroom”, believes the concept of consensus means decisions should be made by the class as a whole. She says consensus is reached when everyone agrees, including the teacher. Epp (p. 79) defines consensus as a group process in which all parties reach agreement through discussion and concession without the use of voting procedures. Saint and Lawson (p. xii) believe that consensus is mutual agreement among members of a group where all legitimate concerns have been addressed to the satisfaction of the group. Tagliere (p. 3) labels consensual process as “teamwork thinking”. He defined “teamwork thinking” as two or more people meeting, thinking, and working together in a highly organized and systematic manner to review information, generate ideas, and make decisions in order to change some present situation to some desired situation. Connor and Lake (p. 38) state in “consensus rule” everyone involved in making the decision must agree with the proposed decision. Schmuck et al. contend that:

group consensus is a decision-making method in which all participants contribute their thoughts and feelings and all share in
the final decision.... For us, consensus does not mean a unanimous vote, nor does it mean that everyone agrees. It means that (a) everyone can paraphrase the issue to show that they understand, (b) everyone has a chance to describe his feelings about the issue, and (c) those who continue to disagree or have doubts will nevertheless say publicly that they are willing to give the decision an experimental try for a prescribed period. (p. 258)

While agreement in some form is the binding element in each of these approaches, these writers have their own perception of what consensus is and how the process should work. The result is that the use of the term consensus can hold different meanings to different people depending on their understandings. Therefore, when the term consensus is used, it is incumbent on the user to delineate exactly what is meant by the term and how it is being used.

The Essence of Authentic Consensus

Since decision making is a reality of life in any organization, it is imperative for educators to find and use an effective method for making those decisions, especially when attempting to instill a second-order change. Effective decision making requires an effective process. There are components of consensus that can help produce a process for finding efficacious solutions for difficult problems. These components, when grouped together, form what could be termed “authentic” consensus.

Several consensus aspects highlighted by Habermas (1973, 1979) and Schmuck et al. (1972) surface as essential elements of productive decision making. Habermas (1979) believes that:

The goal of coming to an understanding is to bring about an agreement that terminates in intersubjective mutuality of reciprocal understanding, shared knowledge, mutual trust, and accord with one another. Agreement is based on recognition of the corresponding validity claims of comprehensibility, truth, truthfulness, and rightness. (p. 3)

As well, Habermas (1973) discusses the underlying assumptions in
consensus.

The very act of participating in a discourse, of attempting discursively to come to an agreement about the truth of a problematic statement or correctness of a problematic norm, carries with it the supposition that a genuine agreement is possible. If we did not suppose that a justified consensus were possible and could in some way be distinguished from a false consensus, then the very meaning of discourse, indeed speech, would be in question. (p. xvi)

Schmuck et al.'s definition echoes the need for understanding, shared knowledge, mutual trust, and truthfulness.

Authentic consensus is decision making that is person centered and focuses on the way people interrelate. The components of authentic consensus are cooperation (Sheeran 1983), "a sense of the meeting" (Likert & Likert, 1976), "leadership by consensus" (Barth, 1990a), dissent (Partridge, 1971), and dialogue (Habermas, 1973) (Figure 2). "Sense of the meeting" involves accepting the groups' conclusions that have been reached in a free exchange of ideas (Likert & Likert, 1976). "Leadership by consensus," on the other hand, views process and product as equally important (Barth, 1990a). Cooperation (Sheeran 1983) and developing dialogue (Habermas, 1973) are

![Figure 2. Components of authentic consensus.](image-url)
also vital for effective problem solving. The impact of consensus is seen in valuing differences (Barth, 1990) while promoting dissent which helps avoid groupthink (Partridge, 1971).

**Cooperation.** Consensus by its very nature offers participants a forum for connecting and collaborating. In an educational setting, consider the possibilities that exist when teachers are given time to work together in groups. They can cooperatively solve problems related to their students, help each other discover and explore creative ways of working, and take responsibility collectively for what happens in the school (Lieberman, 1988, p. 650).

**Sense of the meeting.** The Quakers use what could be entitled authentic consensus in their meetings. Consensus, in Quaker terms, is “the sense of the meeting”, a willing acceptance of the group’s conclusions (Likert & Likert, 1976, p. 146). The process of arriving at consensus is a free and open exchange of ideas that continues until agreement has been reached. “Consensus, then, is a cooperative effort to find a sound solution acceptable to everyone rather than a competitive struggle in which an unacceptable solution is forced on the losers” (p. 146). Wynn and Guditus (1984, p. 45) echo the Quaker interpretation of consensus when they note that voting is a form of participatory decision making, but is not true consensus. They do not believe that voting has a place in consensus building. Voting is a convenient way of disposing of an issue with dispatch but it does not resolve conflict, it only suppresses it. People are accustomed to accepting majority rule, but they often do not support the decision. Authentic consensus cannot be considered simple agreement.

**Leadership by consensus.** Leadership through team management based on consensus decision making provides a viable approach to optimizing the talent available in any organization. “Leadership by consensus,” where
process and product are seen as equally important (Barth, 1990a, p. 48), has a vital connection to effective decision making. The impact of the process by which decisions are made can have a far-reaching effect on the quality of the product. The process results in higher levels of trust and increased willingness to give a proposed solution a chance to prove its merits (p. 48). Through leadership by consensus, the administrator shares the decision-making responsibility. The role of administrator changes from one of manager of the decision-making process to one of participant in the process. This approach increases rather than decreases the focus on the vision of the organization because involvement of others generates deeper feelings of commitment to the goals of the organization and decisions that are made (Wynn & Guditus, 1984, p. 175).

In describing leadership by consensus (LBC), Wynn and Guditus (1984, pp. 23-24) maintain administrators, or their representatives, must analyze organizational tasks -- goal setting, decision making, communicating, planning, organizing, coordinating, and evaluating -- using open communication. LBC contains the elements of full understanding of others' views and problems, open and fair evaluation of alternative solutions to problems, and shared commitment to the decision reached. Wynn and Guditus describe the goal as unanimous commitment, rather than unanimous agreement and accentuate the significance of a “sense of the meeting” rather than voting. They continue by describing how many of the concerns about consensus can be alleviated through “thinking together” by taking all members' needs into consideration, listening to and understanding dissenters' views, attempting to reconcile conflicting goals, striving for solutions that accommodate opposing views, and securing the commitment to implement the decision even from those members who would have preferred another solution (p. 43). Their view of consensual leadership is similar to the role of
leadership described by the Quakers.

**Dissent.** Dissent and consensus appear to be opposing concepts, but Partridge (1971) emphasizes the need for dissent if true consent is to be reached. "A people without the opportunity to express opposition or dissent cannot truly be said to consent" (p. 67). He continues, "There will be a wider area of consent, more active or positive in quality, when dissent can express itself freely.... Openly expressed dissent will tend to maximize consent" (p. 68). This expression of dissent seems to address one of the negative concerns about consensus.

Differences offer a free, abundant, and renewable resource of philosophy, style, and passion and are remarkable sources of ideas for school improvement (Barth, 1990b, p. 515). "What is important about people -- and about schools -- is what is different, not what is the same" (Barth, p. 515). If a school staff were to work toward consensus the effect on students could be profound. Barth (p. 513) expresses the fundamental significance of adult relationships in a school. He asserts that often personal relationships tend to be adversarial: teacher against student, teacher against teacher, principal against teacher, school people against parents. The need is to change adversarial relationships into cooperative and collegial ones. Moreover, authentic consensus is essentially a cooperative process.

**Dialogue.** The concept of authentic consensus is expanded by understanding the need for dialogue (true communication) (Kanter, Stein, & Jick, 1992). Kanter (p. 389) describes Jack Welch of General Electric as a leader who has been uncommonly successful at encouraging dialogue between different layers of his company and presents his idea of true communication as a process that takes countless hours of eyeball to eyeball, back and forth discussions. Further, she states that Welch found that dialogue entails more listening than talking and the ability of human beings to see and accept things
through a constant interactive process aimed at consensus.

Buber (1957, p. 238) contends that genuine dialogue is the way in which agreement and understanding are achieved. In genuine dialogue each person, even if there is disagreement, heeds, affirms, and confirms the other as a valuable person. Only in this way can conflict be arbitrated and resolved.

In authentic consensus, conflicts are resolved and creative new solutions are formulated. Without truthfulness, quality discussions, dissent, shared opinions, dialogue, win/win solutions, participation, creativity, trust, cooperation, and commitment to decisions, authentic consensus cannot exist.

**Concerns about Authentic Consensus**

In coming to appreciate the potential value of authentic consensus, not only the positive contributions of consensus in the decision making process but also its problematic components need to be considered.

Many writers perceive that consensus encourages groupthink. Partridge (1971, pp. 33-34) reflects on the way groupthink affects consensus. He believes we obey and conform because we feel with deep conviction that it is right to do so. Further, he asserts that consent at its lowest form (rather than deliberate or voluntary decision which is the highest form) is often produced when the desire to be seen as part of the group is evident (p. 36). Groupthink as explained by Janis (1983) is “a quick and easy way to refer to a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive ingroup, when the members’ striving for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action” (p. 9).

Freedman and Freedman (1975) explain the reasons groupthink is so powerful. “Human beings are vulnerable to group pressure and will frequently conform to group norms and ‘expectations’ in order to win the group’s approval and to avoid its censure” (p. 145). They also describe the groups most likely to
be affected by this phenomenon as those that are insulated, highly cohesive, friendly with high esprit-de-corps, in which the leader promotes her/his own views rather than encourages an open-minded critical analysis of the problem at hand. They state that groupthink maintains self-esteem in the face of threat (p. 148). Fullan (1993) explains, “With all the educational bandwagons, and all the ad hoc, piecemeal, attractive innovations, educators are particularly susceptible to groupthink” (p. 82). Fullan also warns against balkanization. “Groupthink and balkanization are the nemesis of hyper-collaboration” (p. 82). Avoiding groupthink is difficult in any group decision making process.

If authentic consensus is to be achieved, the realization that this process involves hard work must be acknowledged. “Intelligent organizations have to be run by persuasion and by consent. It is hard work, and frustrating particularly when persuasion does not work, and the consent is not forthcoming” (Handy, 1990, p. 166). Handy also points out that it is often easier to be told what to do than to decide for oneself (p. 167). Encouraging, even expecting, teachers to accept dissent is paramount if groupthink is to be avoided in group decisions. Learning to disagree, but to ‘fight fair’ is a difficult skill to acquire.

Weiss, Cambone, & Wyeth (1992, p. 355) found that teachers were often unprepared to deal with differences of opinion within faculty. For many teachers involved in shared decision-making structures, the initial reaction is to back away from conflict. True consensus is time consuming and complicated. Saint and Lawson (1994, p. 12) stated, “Consensus can only be reached when each member comes to the process confident that the other members are speaking in good faith. Trust can rarely be built in a meeting with a tight agenda filled with business items.” According to Weiss et al., many new demands are placed on the teacher (p. 351). Teachers must
participate face-to-face with their colleagues and confront them on issues of importance for themselves and the school. In a shared decision-making environment, teachers often engage other adults, negotiate, resolve differences, and come to decisions. Weiss et al. contend, “If candor is difficult and conflict is painful, even more demanding are the skills to negotiate and reach agreement” (p. 355). As well, the authors argued that teachers are likely to yearn for a benevolent dictator when they become impatient with the slowness and the interpersonal difficulties of reaching consensus (p. 356).

Each of the concerns of allowing dissent, avoiding groupthink, and undertaking hard work can be manageable if the decision makers are diligent in their quest for effective decision making.

**Shared Decision Making**

The form of decision making chosen affects, in a vital way, the process and the subsequent outcomes produced by that method. The ultimate superiority of shared decision making is supported by numerous writers in that this form of decision making promotes the development of synergy and commitment (Sergiovanni, 1984; Meadows, 1990; Bartunek & Keys, 1979; Sergiovanni, 1990; Weiss, 1993).

Sergiovanni (1984, p. 151) stresses that strong evidence exists that shared decision making is associated with increased worker ego-involvement, sense of ownership, and commitment to work. Meadows (1990, p. 545) believes in the value of shared decision making because several heads produce better decisions than one. As well, she finds that decisions are put into practice more successfully when those doing so have participated in the decision making process and are therefore committed to the end product. Shared decision making enhances leadership that, in turn, promotes the conditions which are conducive to successful restructuring projects.
The assertion is made that shared decisions are more appropriate than those made by individuals due to such things as increased information and the resultant synergy (Piper, 1974, p. 93). Increased information can lead to better decisions since more ideas will be presented and a larger array of possible solutions can be formulated. Synergy helps produce dynamic decisions. The concept of synergy is aptly defined by English (1987): “Synergy is not the product of individuals playing their own music. Synergy is the product of individuals using the same music to become an orchestra” (p. 40). Synergy is the cooperative action of staff members working together that produces a greater result than the sum of their efforts taken independently and in isolation would produce. Cherry (1991) maintains staff ownership can be achieved only in a climate in which the concept of synergy is understood and promoted by the principal (p. 34). English also promotes synergy as a benefit in achieving remarkable breakthroughs in performance and effectiveness. He contends, “Staff synergy can move mountains” (p. 35). It would seem that mountain moving is what change is all about.

A lack of commitment to the solutions selected is often a weakness in the decision making process. Bartunek and Keys (1979, p. 56) highlight the increased commitment shared decision makers feel for the decisions made. Essentially, shared decision making leads to agreement that represents a value system for living together and that provides the basis for decisions and action (Sergiovanni, 1990, p. 57).

**Elements of Shared Decision Making**

The elements of shared decision making, as illustrated in Figure 3, are collaboration (Fullan, 1993), collegiality (Lieberman, 1986), empowerment (Glickman, 1990; Maeroff, 1988b), shared leadership (Meadows, 1992) and the use of win/win strategies (Maeroff, 1988b; Glickman,
1990). Collaboration and collegiality are required for people to work together successfully (Fullan, 1993; Lieberman, 1986). Empowerment, on the other hand, which encompasses professionalism, builds respect (Glickman, 1990; Maeroff, 1988b). At the same time, the roles of the participants are redefined (Meadows, 1992) resulting in a win/win attitude (Maeroff, 1988b; Glickman, 1990). These elements are the same ones that many writers advocate to be fundamental for successful change endeavours. As the concepts are discussed, their connection to change is indicated.

**Shared Decision Making**

- collaboration
- collegiality
- empowerment
- shared leadership
- win/win strategies

*Figure 3.* The essential elements in shared decision making.

**Collaboration.** Collaboration, which at its essence is people talking and working together, is seen by many authors as fundamental to the restructuring process because it has a direct impact on collegiality and trust and promotes the development of synergy (Fullan, 1993; Lieberman, 1986; Maeroff, 1988c; Cherry, 1991; English, 1987). Fullan (1993, pp. 17-18) maintains that collaboration is a critical part of the decision making process since there is a ceiling effect on how much can be learned in isolation. Lieberman (p. 6) stresses the need for a broad view of collaboration in that context, needs, talents, and commitments differ. The one thing that appears to be constant is the inability of schools to improve without people working together.

In her review of the Rand Change Agent study, McLaughlin (1990, p.
12) emphasizes the significance of teacher participation in restructuring initiatives. She stated that implementation strategies were not effective because they failed to provide the on-going support teachers needed, excluded teachers from project development, and signaled a mechanistic role for teachers. Conversely, she found that teacher participation in project decisions was one of the effective strategies. Maeroff (1988c, p. 53) points out that decision making goes hand in hand with breaking down isolation that keeps teachers separate and prevents the network from developing that might move teachers closer to professionalism.

Hargreaves (1994) emphasizes the connection between leadership, collaboration and the change process.

Ultimately, the responsibility for vision-building should be a collective, not individual, one. Collaboration should mean creating the vision together, not complying with the principal's own. Teachers, support staff, parents and students should also be involved in illuminating the mission and purposes of the school. (p. 250)

Collaboration is a powerful and requisite component for effective decision making and for implementing change. But collaboration alone is not powerful enough to serve such a complex process.

**Collegiality**. Collegiality depends on the respect of teachers and principals for themselves and for each other. A staff works hard in a place where colleagues listen well and take one another seriously (while not always agreeing) and everyone is expected to make a difference in the overall life of the school. Trust is the most important ingredient in the success of a school (Sizer, 1990, p. xi). The success of a school depends above all on the quality of interactions between teacher and teacher, and teacher and administrator (Barth 1990, p. 15). The literature suggests that a number of outcomes may be associated with collegiality. Decisions and implementation of solutions tend to be better suited to meet the needs of students and teachers and to produce a higher level of morale and trust among adults. Additionally, adult
learning is energized and more likely to be sustained. “There is evidence that when adults share and cooperate that motivation of students and their achievement rises”, as well, students are more likely to share and cooperate (Barth, p. 31).

**Empowerment.** Professionalism is an important aspect of shared decision making and restructuring or school improvement schemes (Cherry, 1991). “Once they have truly become engaged, empowered, and linked together in a common purpose, teachers will develop ownership status, principals will obtain real partners, students will reap the educational benefits, and the self-esteem of everyone will be enhanced” (pp. 37-38). Glickman (1990) emphasizes the vital connection between school improvement, empowerment, and professionalism when he states, “I truly believe that the movement to improve schools through empowerment may be the last chance in many of our lifetimes to make schools institutions that are worthy of public confidence and professional respect” “p. 69). He also maintains that the issue of how educators are treated within their own walls needs to be resolved if they are to make lasting, significant change in schools. In essence, the premise of professional empowerment is, if educational decisions are made in an information-rich environment then educators will be willing and able to work harder and smarter for their students.

If the purpose of restructuring is improved education for students, then examining the connection between teacher empowerment, professionalism, and improved instruction for students is of great importance. Mertens and Yarger (1988) insist that teacher empowerment leads to improved instruction for students.

Any plan to strengthen teaching as a profession must minimally provide formal structures for ensuring that (a) teachers are empowered, that is, have basic authority and power to practice their teaching based upon professional knowledge, and (b) teachers are involved in the process of making decisions which affect the conduct of their professional practice. It is through teacher
empowerment and involvement that the issues embedded in the notion of teacher professionalism relate to the improvement of classroom instruction.... Teaching will not be professionalized until teachers become more involved in making decisions that affect not only their classroom, but also their professional lives beyond the classroom. (p. 35)

The critical role played by teachers in improving education for students is also confirmed by Johnson (1990) and Maeroff (1988b). Johnson (p. 180) asserts, “Teachers will not be recognized as professionals until they have more say in how children are educated and how schools are run”. Maeroff (1988b, p. xiii) emphasizes the impact that teacher empowerment has on enhancing education for students. He sees a direct connection between empowering teachers and treating them with humaneness and dignity and the way in which they able to provide educational opportunities for their students.

To understand what empowerment is, one needs to view what it is not.

Empowerment is not kidding teachers into thinking preplanned initiatives were their ideas. (That is entrapment.) Empowerment is not holding out rewards emanating from positive power. (That is enticement.) Empowerment is not insisting that participation is mandated from above. (That is enforcement.) Empowerment is not increasing the responsibility and scope of a job in trivial areas. (That is enlargement.) Empowerment is not merely concluding that enlarged job expectations just go with the territory. (That is enslavement.) (Renihan & Renihan, 1992, p. 11)

Maeroff (1988c, pp. 52-53) declares that teacher empowerment means working in an environment in which the teachers act and are treated as professionals. Empowerment has three guiding principles: status, knowledge, and access to decision making. He explains:

Status is fundamental because teachers will not feel professional and others will not see them as professional until more is done to combat low esteem.... People who are misinformed or ill-informed are certainly not likely to perform as responsible professionals.... Decision making goes hand in hand with breaking down the isolation that keeps teachers separate. (p. 53).

Maeroff also contends that principals have more authority than teachers, and unless principals and other administrators do more to share some of their
prerogatives with teachers, the school reform movement will not realize its potential (p. 52). Maeroff (1988b, p. 4) insists that the terms empowerment and professionalism are synonymous. He says giving teachers greater power is a major way to make them more professional and to improve their performance. Moreover, Maeroff (1988a, pp. 473-75) maintains that the empowerment of teachers is essential if schools are to improve. In addition, he argues that teachers want their needs and opinions reflected in the policies of the school and of the district. In other words, teachers need to feel that they have influence if they are to be instrumental in bringing about change that is significant for their students.

**Shared leadership.** The concept of shared decision making has at its core shared leadership. In describing the relationship between shared decision making and shared leadership, Meadows (1992) states, “Relationships must become more important than tasks, cooperation must become more important than competition, and sharing must become more important than controlling. For shared leadership to work, common experiences and respect for differences are essential” (p. 480). The need to redefine the role of the teacher that includes a new way for teachers and principals to work together is at the heart of any restructuring movement. Although sharing of power might be an intimidating prospect for some, the apparent benefits far outweigh the disadvantages.

According to Barth (1990), it is important for a principal to relinquish decision-making authority to teachers. He contends,

I don’t believe that any teacher, principal, or professor can be a serious agent of change in a school while only responding to someone else’s vision. Implementing the ideas and ideals of others will always be half-hearted enterprise. To be sure, finding ways to comply with the needs and goals of the larger organization is important to the survival of that organization and to everyone who is a part of it. But developing ways to foster the elements of teachers’ and principals’ personal visions is a wholehearted and badly needed form of school improvement. (p. 516)
It seems probable that teachers who have a say, are valued, trust their administrators, and are given a power base are going to extend these same opportunities to their students. Additionally, they are more likely to be willing to "go the extra mile" to promote and support second-order change.

Empowering teachers need not mean that principals cease to be in charge, but at least it should mean that principals engage in more consultation and collaboration. In fact the Holmes Group (1986) concluded,

The existing structure of schools, the current working conditions of teachers, and the current division of authority between administration and teachers are all seriously out of step with the requirements of the new profession. If the construction of a genuine profession of teaching is to succeed, schools will have to change. (p. 67)

The necessity to reevaluate the role of teachers and administrators is evident.

**Win/win strategy.** The need to adopt a win/win strategy in a shared decision forum is reflective of the Quakers' belief (Sheeran, 1983, p. 55). Quakers assume that each participant seeks the best solution and that the group, by searching together, can reach that best solution. Likert and Likert (1976), in explaining the vital need for developing a win/win attitude, state,

If win-lose confrontation is used in resolving a conflict, the winning party, whether a nation, organization, or an individual, imposes its preferred solution on the other. Victory brings elation for the winner. Defeat brings feelings of rejection, failure, and impotence and is accompanied by bitterness and hostile attitudes. The losing party may be forced to accept the solution imposed on it, but it will continue the conflict, at least subversively, and sooner or later seek to achieve an outcome more acceptable to it.... Each party must win, at least to that extent. To bring this about, the conflict must be resolved with a win-win approach rather than a win-lose. (pp. 145-146)

The benefits of a win/win atmosphere are vital to shared decision making and impacts significantly on restructuring attempts as well. Garcia (1986, p. 50) emphasizes the need to adopt a win/win strategy in which conflicts are resolved so that no one loses. The aim of shared decision making is that there
are no losers, no one person or group making all of the decisions, and no one person or group bears the burden of responsibility.

**Concerns with Shared Decision Making**

There are numerous positive aspects of shared decision making, but many problems as well (Weiss et al., 1992; Meadows, 1990; Handy, 1990; Wynn & Guditus, 1984). These problems include such things as the ownership of responsibility, the level of involvement, time commitments, and groupthink.

Weiss et al. (1992, p. 357) discuss the uncertainty about where the final responsibility for decisions lies. Meadows (1990) notes, “Different views on leadership, different expectations of the principal, and the lack of an agreed-upon decision-making process generated underlying feelings of hostility on the part of staff members who felt left out. Trust among colleagues disintegrated” (p. 546). Handy (1990) reminds us that “people who are free to choose may choose wrongly” (p. 259). He explains, “Choice means responsibility -- for failure as well as success.... The organization of consent puts a premium on competence” (p. 167). The shared nature of responsibility in the shared decision making venue is problematic, but not insurmountable.

Making sure that everyone is involved and supportive at some level of the decision making process is vital if decisions reached are going to be enacted. In their study Weiss et al. (1992, p. 353) found teachers embroiled in conflict concerning who chose to participate and who chose not to be involved in group decision making. They discovered some teachers sometimes resented those who kept aloof. On the other side, the teachers offered good reasons for not becoming involved.

Wynn and Guditus (1984) in summarizing the problems of group decision making say,
There are a number of hazards in group decision making, which do not negate its value but which should be recognized and neutralized. These hazards include the need for greater time and energy, the threat of loss of organizational control, indecision, the pathologies encountered in crisis-related problem solving, and the tyranny of 'groupthink', the sense of euphoria and invulnerability that tends to discourage divergent views and prompt closure on solutions before the problem is thoroughly discussed. (p. 122)

Undoubtedly authentic consensus and shared decision making are complex processes and there are reasons for caution to exist. But the potential benefits that could be gleaned from combining these two concepts far outweigh the concerns outlined.

**The Potential**

A close inspection of the attributes of dynamic harmonization reveals the potential this process has for promoting the development of a learning organization and of ethical leadership that produces the environment necessary for community building. As previously stated, community appears to be the environment in which change could take place. Since there is no recipe for change, there can be no doubt that change involves risk taking, and risk taking is more likely to occur if the environment is seen as a safe place for the risk taker. Dynamic harmonization is postulated as the process that promotes this safe environment. Nothing guarantees productive change, but second-order change could take place in an environment of school community. Finding processes that will promote change is fundamental to the successful implementation of second-order changes.

I have chosen to use the tree as a metaphor (Figure 4) in an effort to facilitate an understanding of the various components of DH, the potential effect on decision makers, and the potential DH could have in school restructuring. The tree (the DH process) has as its tap roots authentic consensus and shared decision making. Without these roots grounded in trust
the tree would not be able to grow and flourish into a strong support system for the developing fruit (change implementation). These roots grow in trust; this trust nourishes the roots and allows them to produce the trunk (DH) that produces and supports the branches and the leaves of community. It is DH (the trunk) that combines authentic consensus and shared decision making into a process that can produce an environment (branches and leaves) in a school that has the potential of becoming community: a place that many writers feel schools need to be (Sergiovanni, 1994; Glickman, 1990; Lieberman, 1988). It is through the development of branches and leaves that the tree can produce the fruit (change). These fruits are the ones that can be used to improve education for students.

![Diagram](image-url)

**Figure 4.** The dynamic harmonization process.
The advantages of working together that consensual decision making promotes are acknowledged by Saint and Lawson (1994), Sergiovanni (1994), and Sheeran (1983). Saint and Lawson explain,

Consensus management assumes that each individual is unique and valuable, and each has something to contribute. Diverse individuals, teams, and departments must work together for the common good of organization. Valuing each other’s differences and fostering unity is the underlying assumption of consensus management and consensus decision making. The emerging role and function of the leader-manager is to create unity yet value differences. (pp. 66-67)

Sergiovanni (p. 150) believes the benefits of being united with others in a collective conscience gives each person certain rights and guarantees a sense of individualism while at the same time exacting certain community obligations. The Quakers’ use of consensus in their meetings encourages the appreciation for each individual and the development of synergy (Sheeran, p. 61). They emphasize acceptance of one another, mutual respect, avoidance of the manipulative conduct that rhetorical style often hides, a sense of the partiality of one’s own insights, and one’s dependence on searching together with the group for better conclusions than anyone alone could attain. Saint and Lawson believe, “In seeking mutual agreement, the consensus process fosters individual differences, personal self-reliance and self-esteem, creativity and innovation, cooperative attitudes, improved interpersonal communications and relationships, responsibility, and accountability” (p. 3).

The use of authentic consensus in the shared decision milieu has the potential to produce beneficial results. Authentic consensus and shared decision making conjoined could produce the community that is now being recognized as the environment needed in education. In order to establish a sense of community in schools, a movement toward gemeinschaft of mind is essential (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 6). Sergiovanni says gemeinschaft refers to
the bonding together of people that results from their mutual commitment to a common goal, shared set of values, and shared concept of being. "If teachers can communicate more openly with their colleagues, become more sensitive to school wide problems, and have more opportunities to share in the work of the school, the concept of a school community will become a real possibility" (Lieberman, 1988, p. 651). Lieberman (p. 649) contends that for there to be a community of leaders in a school, teachers must have opportunities to take on more responsibilities, to have more decision-making power, and to be held accountable. Teachers must have a large share of the responsibility for seeing to it that students are actively engaged in learning. They must have the necessary time and resources to do the job right. Equally importantly, they must be supported through the rough times as they struggle with new ways of working together. She continues, "Indeed, the more that teachers share leadership, responsibility, and accountability with one another and with their principals, the more they come to perceive the school as a community" (p. 651). Dynamic harmonization, as described here, has the potential to produce a culture that promotes the environment of trust and resourcefulness that is seen as the most effective way to produce community.

**Dynamic Harmonization Techniques**

While this discussion is not intended to be a recipe or blueprint for using dynamic harmonization, it is intended to give some understanding of the techniques that could be useful in producing effective decisions. In considering which techniques to highlight and in keeping with the spirit of community, I have emphasized the process as well as the product. Many of the ideas presented here are ones that the Society of Friends (Quakers) incorporate in their decision making process or coming to the "sense of the meeting."

Three skills that seem to be required for dynamic harmonization are
the ones that Morley (1993, pp. 16-19) believes are essential for Friends’
decision making; release, long focus, and transition to light. Release involves
allowing the participants to “get something off their chest” or “clear the air” in
an atmosphere of acceptance and tenderness (p. 16). Learning to take a
larger view of a problem or situation is the essence of long focus (p. 17). “By
focusing on something distant you can see more, even though everything
closer is a little out of focus” (pp. 17-18). Transition to light involves turning
inward to transcend differences and sense an enveloping harmony (p. 19).
Each of these components requires a significant time commitment from the
participants.

There needs to be flexible time constraints so that there is ample time
for reflection and sharing. Reflecting and sharing are at the heart of dynamic
harmonization. Friends’ meetings open and close with quiet and are
permeated with silent periods. These periods of silence “lift hearts and minds
out of self-centered desires into openness to seek the common good” (Morley,
1993, p. 14). In her discussion on building community, Ryan (1995, p. 88) also
emphasizes the need for a period of silence if open reflection is to be initiated.
During these periods of silence, learning to listen to another’s ideas and
learning to listen inwardly are important (Sheeran, 1983, p. 48).

Formally introducing a way to disagree with a decision is essential.
Friends have three statements that they recognize as the acceptable
procedure for disagreement. They may say “I disagree but do not wish to
stand in the way” for the least serious disagreement. The decision goes
forward as stated. The second level is, “Please minute me as opposed,” which
is the middle ground. The decision may or may not go forward depending on
the comments of others. The last level is, “I am unable to unite with the
proposal.” The decision is blocked and will be dropped or readdressed at some
future time (Sheeran, 1983, pp. 65-70). An agreed on procedure for dissent
was instigated in dynamic harmonization.

The last two points are foundational for dynamic harmonization: servant leadership and no voting. The decision leader was modelled after the Friend’s clerk who is a facilitator but has no more power or rank than the other participants. The clerk steers the meeting but does not dominate (Sheeran, 1983, p. 51). Authentic consensus and voting are mutually exclusive terms. The decisions were a coming together or authentic consensus.

Summary

Since the term consensus has been used in so many ways, I am purposing dynamic harmonization as the new term to describe the process outlined as authentic, consensual, shared decision making. “Dynamic” is used because the process and the solutions chosen must be characterized by continuous change, activity, and progress and be marked by intensity and vigour. “Harmonization” denotes the act of agreement in decision making in which the whole is more than the sum. Each person and element in the process has a part to play. The outcome produced far outreaches the product a simple combination could generate and could be called the “chef-d'oeuvre”.

Consensus and decision making can be transformed into dynamic harmonization (the “oeuvre” of the decision making world). This process involves sharing knowledge, valuing others’ ideas, developing trust, being trustworthy, honouring and encouraging dissent, taking time, instilling a win/win attitude, nurturing creativity, resolving conflicts, and being committed. The end product (the chef-d'oeuvre) is produced by synergy, is an agreed on but not immovable decision, is an agreement that everyone can articulate, and is understood and supported by everyone.

Dynamic harmonization is an ambitious undertaking. But if the
outcome of true, committed agreement is realized, the benefit could be genuine problem solving: solutions that can be supported and implemented by everyone. When contemplating this imposing process, I am encouraged by the words of Margaret Mead who said, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has” (Tagliere, 1993, p. 2). Learning to work together is the most important skill that educators could learn. Dynamic harmonization appears to be a promising process for such learning. This process could open doors in education that have been closed in the past due to the isolation of teachers. “Management must empower its people in the deepest sense and remove the barriers and obstacles it has created that crush and defeat the inherent commitment, creativity, and quality service that people are otherwise prepared to offer” (Covey, 1992, p. 264).

Dynamic harmonization encompasses all of the attributes that are promoted as being pivotal for building schools as community so that improved education for students can be the result. Bauer (1992) noted, “One of the keys to success in shared decision making is building consensus about what the process is. With that consensus, you’re on your way; without it, you’re doomed to fingerprint, distrust, and general malaise” (p. 26). The use of dynamic harmonization could promote the kind of decision making that seems rare in education today. It is my belief that this study led to interesting insights into and significant understandings concerning the decision making process and the world of educational restructuring.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The union of Curiosity and Commitment is barren without Experimentation. They may dream of taking action, but ideas are simply that, ideas. Ideas are no substitute for life blood of exploration found in Experimentation. (Ryan, 1995, p. 85)

Experimentation connotes trying something new to see if or how it works. The essence of this study was to try a new decision making process to see how it worked. Studying a new process that involves making substantial changes in the way things have been done is difficult, as exemplified by Kurt Lewin’s words: “If you want to understand how something works, try changing it” (in Schein & Bennis, 1965, p. 29).

The need to connect the research method with the purposes of the study is fundamental. Each study needs to match the questions being asked with the way in which these questions are to be answered (Sherman & Webb, 1988; Shulman, 1988). The purpose of this study was to ascertain the use of dynamic harmonization in a school that was attempting to implement a change. This study was based on theory in action. According to Lather (1991), “theory adequate to the task of changing the world must be open-ended, nondogmatic, speaking to and grounded in the circumstances of everyday life” (p. 55). While “world changing” can be considered an exaggeration of the intention of this study, the examination of the problem was addressed in an open-ended fashion, which was grounded in everyday life of a school staff and that, hopefully, does affect the world in a small way.

After reflecting on the most appropriate way of answering the
questions addressed in this research, I choose action research (AR). Action research gives both researcher and participants the opportunity to observe actions and to infer meaning from those actions (Elliot, 1991, p. 7). AR has been divided into various types and categories by many writers (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996; Carson, 1989; Reason, 1994). The descriptions of AR that best fits the present research are participatory, practical, and emancipatory. The aim of participatory action research (PAR) is to produce knowledge and action useful to a group of people and to empower people through construction of their own knowledge (Reason, 1994, p. 328). PAR offers the type of approach which accommodates the intense involvement of the staff and the researcher in a setting most conducive to studying decision making and its affect on change implementation.

It offers all participants in the work of education a flexible approach to school improvement through critically informed action and reflection which is appropriate to the real, complex and often confusing circumstances and constraints of the modern school. It provides on the one hand a framework for recognizing ideals in the reality of the work of schools' ideals - in - action, and on the other, a concrete procedure for translating evolving ideas into critically informed action and increasing the harmony between educational ideas and educational action. (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p. 7)

Practical action research deals directly with school practice and uses theories to improve practice (Carson, p. iv). Zuber-Skerritt states that emancipatory action research is "collaborative, critical, and self-critical inquiry by practitioners into a major problem or issue or concern in their own practice. They own the problem and feel responsible and accountable for solving it through teamwork and through following a cyclical process" (p. 3). This chapter, describes the method, the design, and the rigour which was applied.
Action Research Methodology

General Description

Carr and Kemmis (1986) give a succinct definition of AR.

Action research is simply a form of self-reflection enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out. (p. 162)

Stone (1980) states, “The aim of action research is to identify and gather pertinent data that will help a group solve a problem” (p. 3). Carr and Kemmis (p. 165) assert that the two basic aims of AR are to involve those participating in the practice under investigation and to improve its practice, understanding of it, and the situation surrounding it.

An effective way to solve a problem is to learn about the issue by studying the interpersonal dynamics involved, by observing the changes which are produced from intervention, and by acknowledging the changes in perceptions over time (Stone, 1980, p. 3).

Action research begins with the notion that most of the social, biological, and political problems affecting contemporary communities, nations and the global community are complex and cannot be identified or solved without better sources of information and greater interpersonal and intersectoral collaboration. (Schensul & Schensul, 1992, p. 196)

The functions of AR are to improve practice and to illuminate theory. “Action research is small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world and a close examination of the effects of such intervention” (Cohen & Manion, 1985, p. 208). AR is concerned with diagnosing a problem in a specific context and is therefore situational; it is collaborative since the researchers and participants work together; it is also participatory because researchers take part in the project; and it is self-evaluative in that modifications are continually evaluated (Cohen & Manion, p. 208). Collaboration between
researcher and participants is seen as yielding a superior method of study as compared to a researcher working in isolation because the forum leads to an understanding of the issues that is more complete, and the information gleaned is more likely to be used (Schensul & Schensul, 1992, p. 164).

AR can be described as a method of collaborative problem solving with numerous outcomes and benefits. "Collaborative problem solving incorporates creative and critical thinking skills and generates the 'aha' that motivates the problem-solver to move in new directions" (Schensul & Schensul, 1992, p. 195). AR improves practice by "developing the practitioners' capacity for discrimination and judgment in particular, complex, human situations. It unifies inquiry, the improvement of performance and the development of persons in their professional roles" (Elliott, 1991, p. 52). Cohen and Manion (1985, pp. 216-17) describe the occasions when AR could be effectively incorporated: (1) replacing a traditional teaching method with a new or different one; (2) changing learning or teaching strategies; (3) improving evaluative procedures; (4) developing some modification or change in attitudes or values; (5) providing teachers with in-service; (6) introducing new management and control techniques; and (7) changing some aspect of administration. The concept of "ideas – in – action" is linking theory and action which is the essence of AR (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p. 6).

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, pp. 22-23) summarize some of the key features of AR. AR improves education by changing it and learning from the consequences of these changes. AR is participatory in that people work to improve their own practices. It is developed through self-reflection, is collaborative and establishes self-critical communities of people. AR encourages people to theorize about their own practice.
Essential Components

This study can be described as a story involving a group of detectives solving a mystery. Wolcott (1994, p. 22) proposes that all research should be viewed in this manner. In solving a mystery the detective needs to make sure all pertinent information is gathered and analyzed. The same is true of research; care must be taken that the necessary steps and procedures are followed in order for the problem to be properly examined. The stages of AR are addressed in various forms and orders by many writers (e.g., Wolcott, 1994; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Elliott, 1991; Stone, 1980). The stages followed in this research were: reading and analyzing the literature surrounding decision making and school restructuring; devising (with many modifications) a new decision making model; introducing this model and the research plan to a school staff. The staff then agreed to use DH (dynamic harmonization) as a model in implementing two second order changes and decided to use DH in their staff meetings. Together, we evaluated the use of DH.

The AR spiral of planning, action, and evaluation that begins with planning, followed by acting and observing, then moves to reflecting, next to revising the plan, and ultimately to repeating the steps (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988, p. 11) was an integral aspect of this research. The need for flexibility due to AR's unpredictability as described by Kemmis and McTaggart (p. 13) became an important feature as the study progressed. As well, the need for critical self-reflection that is evaluative and descriptive as Kemmis and McTaggart highlight (pp. 13-14) was a pivotal component.

The framework of activities for conducting AR as delineated by Elliott (1991, pp. 72-77) was followed in this study. The first step of linking an idea to an action by identifying and clarifying a situation that one wishes to change or improve was accomplished by the staff employing DH to make the daily
decisions in the school. Monthly staff meetings, three individual interviews, and five reflective meetings that were all tape recorded as well as the staff's writing in their reflective journals fulfilled the next step of information gathering or reconnaissance. The description and explanation of this information in order to ascertain their impact on the situation was analyzed on an on-going basis.

**Rigour and Validity**

Although there is some disagreement concerning the use of such terms as rigour and validity in qualitative research (Leininger, 1994), many writers feel these terms may be used with the understanding the meaning is not interchangeable with the usage in quantitative research (e.g., Eisner & Peshkin, 1990; Bryman, 1989; Argyris & Schon, 1989; Wolcott, 1990).

Since AR does not have a set structure as does research in the quantitative realm, the question of maintaining rigour and validity is raised. "In quantitative research, the good may be found in fidelity to design, whereas in qualitative research, relatively lacking in canons and conventions, the good is more elusive because its procedures are more idiosyncratic" (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990, pp. 1-2). While AR lacks conventional standards of rigour, the more rigorous methods do not have the same level of participant involvement and therefore might be less effective (Bryman, 1989, p. 183). The action researcher's job is to meet standards of appropriate rigour. "And for this purpose, AR needs three things: a way of representing research results that enhances their usability, a complementary way of constructing causality, and an appropriate methodology of causal inference" (Argyris & Schon, 1989, p. 612). Rigour is intimately intertwined with the establishment of validity.

Lather's (1991, pp. 65-68) four validity criteria for establishing empirical rigour were used in this study. Triangulation is one strategy for
establishing data trustworthiness. Data collection triangulation included the use of reflective journals, taped interviews, participant observations, reflective meetings from the researcher and participants’ points of view. Another criterion is construct validity that involves theory-building. The staff engaged in several professional development activities involving the study of the theoretical underpinning of decision making. The next criterion is face validity that provides a ‘click of recognition’ and a ‘yes, of course’. The consociates exchanged viewpoints and insights that produced many “ahas” along the way. The last criterion is catalytic validity that represents the degree the research focuses the participants toward reality. Using a decision making process in the “real world” of teaching kept us all focused on reality and our thoughts and reflections enmeshed in that world.

While validity is presented in many forms: external, internal, instrumental, concurrent, theoretical, criterion, predictive, and apparent, the essence of validity is ascertaining whether one is measuring whatever it is that is supposed to be measured (Wolcott, 1990, pp. 122-123). All of the participants worked together to assure that we were staying focused on decision making and its effects on the staff and the culture of the school.

Even though Wolcott (1990) does not appear to be overly concerned with others’ emphasis on validity, he acknowledges the need to maintain validity in his work in order to “satisfy the implicit challenge of validity” (p. 127). I attempted to follow the nine points Wolcott (pp. 127-134) believes are essential. The first point of talking a little and listening a lot was a constant struggle; knowing when to talk and when to listen was a continuous dilemma for me. His second and third points are to record accurately and to begin writing early. I found, as he suggests, that early writing gives time for disclosing the need for further information as well as getting feedback from others. His fourth point involves letting readers “see” for themselves. He
stresses the need to “let informants speak for themselves” so that their thoughts are expressed rather than the observations and interpretations of the researcher alone. Knowing when to write a letter to the staff to keep everyone on track and well informed and knowing how much to comment in the staff’s reflective journals were concerns I faced daily. The fifth guideline is to report fully even data that does not seem to fit for one never knows where such unexplained or unexpected information might lead. This research has produced a very large amount of data. It is difficult to ascertain the information that fits into this category of “unexplained or unexpected” and which is simply unnecessary. The sixth is to be candid. Qualitative research is subjective and one should not attempt to establish objectivity. Being honest and open with my feelings has been an interesting activity that has required a great deal of reflection. The final three points are to seek feedback, to try to achieve balance, which Wolcott describes as “rigorous subjectivity,” and to write accurately. I have attempted to meet these goals by seeking feedback after summarizing the individual interviews, checking perceptions in the reflective journals, and attending weekly mini-staff meetings.

Wolcott (1990) summarizes his thoughts with a statement and a question. “A preoccupation with validity may be...a distraction to our collective efforts at qualitative research” (p. 148) and “How valid is valid enough” (p. 149)? Following the steps suggested by Wolcott appears to establish an acceptable level of rigour and validity without undermining the importance of maintaining the AR format.

**Generalizability**

Another concern for action researchers is the difficulty of generalizing their findings. Eisner and Peshkin (1990) purpose that “one of the central aims of scientific inquiry is to create ideas that allow us to anticipate the
future" (p. 171). If qualitative research is to be acknowledged, then generalizing the findings of all research must be seriously considered. In generalizing the finding of AR, patterns and linkages are the most important aspects, rather than attempting to infer the results on a population. Eisner and Peshkin (1990) support this thought. Generalizations “consist of ideas-images that in some way allow us to understand or anticipate phenomena we have not yet encountered from phenomena we have encountered.... Generalizations enable us to form expectations on the basis of prior experience” (p. 171). They further assert that we are generalizing each time we learn a lesson from the past and that qualitative research can be generalized by “focusing on what is, what may be, and what could be” (p. 172). Donmoyer (1990, p. 181) describes this sort of generalization as “experiential learning”. Learning from mistakes and refocusing on the task at hand (maybe even changing the task at hand) is the mainstay of AR.

Donmoyer (1990) and Schofield (1990) also find this method of generalizing at least as effective, if not more, effective than the traditional type. “It no longer makes sense to think of generalizability as synonymous with the use of large samples and statistical procedures designed to ensure that the large samples accurately represent the population” (Donmoyer, p. 181). Schofield (pp. 208-209) highlights the impracticality of research producing universal laws and reiterates that social science can be generalized to what is happening, to what may be happening, and to what could be happening. She further states that “generalizability is best thought of as a matter of “fit” between the situation studied and others to which one might be interested in applying the concepts and conclusions of that study” (p. 222). Generalization of AR must be viewed on a very different plane than the findings produced in the quantitative realm.

Generalizing the results of this study will best be considered in the “fit”
category. Using the information discovered here will be useful to others who find their current decision making process inadequate.

**Design of the Study**

This study was designed using the principles and characteristics of PAR. In this section, the general orientation and specific elements of the study design are described. Although some specifics of the design were specified at the beginning of the study, many of the decisions were made collaboratively by all the participants, staff and me. To capture, understand, and, eventually, classify and compare the perspective of the participants, the researcher must choose, assess, and redesign research methods and schedules to fit the community being studied (Pitman & Maxwell, 1992, p. 754).

**General Orientation**

This study incorporated the features of AR proposed by Cohen and Manion (1985, pp. 209-10). The first step is the “spur-to-action” in order to expedite an objective. Next step is the improvement of relationships that includes job analysis to improve professional functioning and efficiency, organizational change and innovation, and development of theoretical knowledge. Each of these were important components of my research since group dynamics and relationships were examined. The AR requirements as described by Carr and Kemmis’ (1986, pp. 165-166) were important features, as well. First, the subject-matter is a social practice that can be improved. In this study the decision making process and its impact on a change endeavour were the subject matter. Second, the planning, acting, observing, and reflecting spiral were incorporated. Third, the project involved those responsible for and affected by the practice studied.
Twenty-two of the twenty-nine school staff and I participated in this study. While Carr and Kemmis (1986, p. 157) encourage the involvement of parents and students, the design and time constraints of this study did not lend itself to the involvement of more than one group.

**Site Selection**

Selecting an appropriate school in which to conduct the study was crucial. The key was finding a school in which the staff had already decided to implement a fundamental or second-order change and to be invited by the staff to become involved with this change project. I contacted a Deputy Director of the public school system in the urban area where I wished to conduct the study. He was able to provide me with the name of a school that might wish to participate in this study. After receiving the name, I then contacted the principal and she invited me to make a presentation to the staff. The school staff then agreed for me to assist them in implementing their restructuring endeavors using DH. The staff’s involvement in deciding to become part of my study was paramount. If PAR is to be successful, it is vital to build a collaborative, trustful relationship. I believed that this was more likely to happen if the whole staff rather than the administrators were the ones to make this commitment.

**Phases of the Study**

I gave a brief presentation to the staff in the spring before my study began in earnest at school opening after summer vacation. The beginning activities focused on getting to know each other and introducing the theoretical underpinnings and basic components of DH to the staff. As the study progressed I was in attendance at the school almost daily. I spent as much time as possible in the staffroom so that I could get to know the staff on
a personal level. I also wanted the staff to see me as a member of the staff and not as an administrator.

The three stages for this study were program building, focused exploration, and theory development (Mitchell, 1995, p. 64). While I found, as had Mitchell, that program building was more prominent in the early days, focused exploration in the middle, with theory development in the latter days, there were times that these stages were combined or revisited.

**Program Building**

Two projects were undertaken at the school. The staff had chosen to implement two program change initiatives and I introduced DH as the process for implementing these changes. The beginning of this study involved deciding on a focus for the school staff’s planned improvement. The use of dynamic harmonization was introduced to the staff and time was needed to build an understanding of the process. This understanding of the process was an ongoing procedure.

**Focused Exploration**

The spiral of plan - act - observe - reflect - plan again as described by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988, p. 11) was the basis for this study. While Kemmis and McTaggart (p. 48) suggest that one-month time periods are appropriate, the time periods varied because they were influenced by the restructuring project chosen and the way in which the staff decided to implement it.

**Theory Development**

From time to time, as seemed appropriate, the staff discussed what DH meant to the them, how DH influenced the change process, and the ways
in which DH impacted teachers personally. At various times discussions were held in large group settings, small group settings, and individually. These discussions were conducted during monthly staff meetings, the three individual interviews, and the five reflective small group meetings. I also wrote letters to the staff concerning our progress and to explain pertinent issues as questions and concerns arose. As well, I provided the staff with access to books and articles on topics of interest.

**Data Collection Techniques**

A qualitative researcher needs to be a storyteller (Wolcott, 1994, p. 17). "To be able to tell the story well is critical" and the story must be grounded in the observed experience (Wolcott, p. 17). If this story is to be well grounded, Pitman and Maxwell (1992, pp. 762-63) believe that a qualitative researcher must include five components in data collection: writing extensive field notes, developing a regular procedure for rewriting and indexing, tracking and noting researcher bias, conducting early analysis, and using multiple sources of evidence. Wolcott (pp. 17-22) adds the necessity to record events both in chronological order and narrator order that is based on a logic other than chronological sequence. Further, he stresses progressive focusing, description of a "day-in-the-life," and emphasizing a critical or key event in the process. Additionally, he emphasizes the importance of introducing the characters and the plot, describing the group interactions, following an analytical framework, using the Rashomon effect, and endeavouring to write a mystery.

These components were addressed in my use of participant observation, reflective meetings, interviews with participating staff members, artifact collection, and personal reflective journals. I used field notes, journals writing, and tape recordings to chronicle each of these activities. The consociates were asked to write in their journals weekly. I wrote field notes
and reflections on an “as need” basis that resulted in my writing many times each week. I asked for reflective groups to be convened when there were issues of concern that needed to be resolved by a group of the staff. These issues dealt with DH, their chosen program changes, and other problems of a more general nature. Each group’s recommendations were presented to the staff for their consideration at the monthly staff meetings. Three individual interviews were conducted, one at the beginning, middle, and end of the study.

Data Analysis

My analysis is of the “describe and display” format described by Pitman and Maxwell (1992, pp. 763-65). The first stage of the written analysis served to acquaint the reader with the data available. The initial stage of the final analysis served to reacquaint the reader with all the data and outlined the data for the discussion section. The next level of analysis was conceptual and included such activities as labeling and indexing. The data were inspected to find patterns and themes. The aim was to identify data categories. Following this the data were assessed to find the critical or central information to the study. Once again the data were indexed, coded, and classified so that reflection on the research questions could be accomplished. The distribution of the thinness and thickness of the data was indicated. Finally, there was a narrative description of the findings presented.

During the process, I also used the ten elements that Wolcott (1994, pp. 29-35) outlined: (1) highlight the findings; (2) display the findings; (3) follow and report “systematic” fieldwork; (4) flesh out whatever analytical framework guided the data collection; (5) identify patterned regularities in the data; (6) compare with another case; (7) evaluate; (8) contextualize in a broader analytical framework; (9) critique the research process; and (10) propose a redesign for the study. These elements overlapped with these ideas
suggested above, but also added emphasis and detail to the steps described by Pitman and Maxwell.

The findings are highlighted and displayed in Chapter Five. The systematic fieldwork is reported in Appendix G. This Appendix contains a list of the activities in which the staff engaged during the study. The analytic framework for data collection has been reported here and is consistent with action research expectations. I discovered patterns in the data by looking for the answers to the seven questions presented in Chapter One. During the perusal of the data I uncovered two new questions that needed to be addressed as well. The findings that are pertinent to each question are highlighted in Chapter Five. I also looked for themes as they emerged. No other study was found that is similar to this one since DH is a new concept and therefore no comparison was made. I looked for the metaphors that the staff had used to explain their feelings and thoughts on the study and their participation in the study. These metaphors were used as topic headings in the presentation of the findings in Chapter Five and are an integral part of making sense of the findings.

Due to the nature of participatory action research (collective self-reflection) (Kemmis & Taggert, 1988, p. 5), the guidelines for determining the use of DH in successfully implementing a change endeavour was decided by the researcher and staff together. “Participants must collaborate in discussion to build a language by which they must analyze and improve their understandings and action in the situation” (p. 12). The analysis of DH and its use by the school staff was examined by looking at the way in which it produces change in three aspects. These three aspects had to do with the individual work and the culture of the group: changes in the use of language and discourses, changes in activities and practices, and changes in social relationships and organization (p. 15).
In attempting to formulate an effective way to evaluate the use of DH by the staff, I drew-up a list of indicators. These indicators were: (1) the feelings and examples of increased empowerment expressed by the staff; (2) the attainment of the change goal that was set by the staff; (3) the degree of collegiality and collaboration experienced by the staff; (4) the level of trust among the staff; (5) the opportunities provided for dissenting points of view and the reaction to these views in the meetings; (6) the use of language which is inclusive and invitational; (7) the amount of carry over into other problem solving situations; and (8) the degree of community achieved. These indicators are featured in Chapter Six.

The framework for this study was presented in Chapter Two. It is the reference “to some recognized body of theory in one's special field” to which Wolcott (1994, p. 34) refers. The critique of the research process and the proposed redesign of the study in the form of questions that are raised by the findings of this study are described in Chapter Six.

Ethical Considerations

Research that involves people needs to be conducted with extreme care regarding ethical considerations (see Appendix I). The guidelines as developed by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada were followed, and each person on the school staff was given a copy of the guidelines. The participants were informed about the nature and purposes of the study. Their participation was voluntary, and they were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time. They were each given the opportunity to react to reports and interpretations of the data of which they were a part. Anonymity of the school and participants continued to be maintained.
Summary

In this chapter I have described the research design that I used in this study. The activities that made up the study were used in the cycle of plan-act-observe-reflect-plan again. The framework of the analysis presented was followed in an attempt to avoid "any temptation to go beyond the data" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 39). Explaining the way that data were collected and analyzed is given in hopes of aiding the reader to get a sense of where this study planned to go and how it got there (if it got there). I have endeavored to "cast [my] lot with a creative human imagination capable of being informed rather than bound by an ever-expanding universe of facts" (p. 41). During the compilations and analysis of the data, the idea of storytelling has been a compelling one for me. This study is designed to enable me to tell a mystery tale filled with adventure that unfolds in the life of one school implementing change using dynamic harmonization.
CHAPTER FOUR
DESCRIPTION OF THE SCHOOL

This qualitative research study is influenced by the context in which the study was conducted. If the findings are to be fully understood by the reader then a thick description of the context is necessary. Therefore, this chapter includes a detailed description of the school, the staff, their culture, modes of communication, and the change initiatives the staff undertook. The perceptions and understandings, gleaned during many hours of attendance at the school, were gathered through staff journal reflections, individual interviews, monthly and weekly staff meetings, reflective group meetings, informal conversations, and observations.

Inkonze Elementary School¹

This study was conducted in an elementary school of two hundred students and twenty-nine staff members during the 1996-1997 school year. The school was an inner-city school in a large urban public school division in Saskatchewan. Inkonze (ˈɪn-konˈz) was designated as a community school. This is a provincial designation and each school board applies for the schools in its system. There are numerous guidelines that must be met, two of which have to do with the percentage of Aboriginal students and the percentage of students living below the poverty line that attend the school.

Inkonze was located in a transient, multi-cultural neighbourhood of working class people many of whom were on social assistance. High numbers

¹ In order to protect the anonymity of the participants, the name of the school and the name of the staff members are pseudonyms. The name "Inkonze" was one chosen by the staff. It is a Dene word that means to learn a little. We did "learn a little."
of students come from single or blended families. The student ethnic breakdown was 60-65% Aboriginal, 5-8% Oriental, and the 27-35% Caucasian. Due to the high number of needy children, there was a nutrition program and a “clothing bank” at the school. During an average year there has been as much as 200% turnover in the student population. Over the six months of the study, more than 100% of the student body had changed.

The school was an old, three storey, brick building with wooden floors. The office area, located in the newer part of the building next to the gymnasium, was on the lower level. The only student washrooms were in the basement as were the caretakers’ office and the nutrition room. The primary years classrooms, library, and special needs classroom were on the first floor. The second floor contained the middle years classes, the staff lounge, and staff washrooms. The third floor was home to the senior students and the stage area in which weekly assemblies took place. There was no air conditioning. The heating fluctuated greatly throughout the building and could not be regulated by the teaching staff. The roof in the library leaked and during the spring and fall an assortment of buckets and pans were arranged on the floor, tables, and chairs to catch the water. The high ceilinged classrooms and hallways were kept very clean by the caretakers. The hallways were extremely wide and used for an assortment of classroom activities. The materials in the classrooms seemed to be in a habitual state of controlled disorder. The classrooms and halls were decorated with student work. Near the office was a display case with various student trophies arrayed.

The Staff

Of the twenty-nine staff, eight were part-time. The principal had full-time administrative release, while the vice-principal had half-time release and half-time classroom teaching duties. The community status of the school
provided for a full-time community coordinator. Two full-time (one day, one night) and one part-time (night) caretakers maintained the building. The clerical tasks were handled by a full-time secretary and a 20% library technician. Of the total staff there were five full-time classroom teachers, two teachers were half-time special subject instructors and half-time classroom teachers, and four were full-time classroom based paraprofessionals. Of the two teachers who shared a class at the beginning of the year, one left the school in October due to the early arrival of her baby and the other took over as the full-time classroom teacher. In addition, one full-time special needs classroom teacher, a half-time teacher librarian, two half-time resource room teachers, and 20% music teacher were the speciality component. During the fall there were also two interns. A small percentage of the staff were of Aboriginal descent and the majority were Caucasian.

The classroom teachers and teacher associates were members of a family group, primary, middle, and senior years. The resource teachers were assigned to work with certain family groups as well. Each family was taught by one teacher and consisted of children from several grade levels.

Of the staff, ten were new to the school; one teacher returned after a maternity leave. The new members included the vice-principal. While the new staff members attended an intensive weekend workshop on Control Theory and Quality Schools, which they reported had helped them bond, the rest of the staff had attended the intensive weekend the year before. The number of new staff had a direct impact on staff relationships and communication. At various times the lack of corporate history was seen as a problem for many and was often cited as a source of concern. By January the distinct possibility that the principal would be transferred the following school year was widely known and her likely departure was a concern as well.

The staff experience varied from some first year teachers and teacher
associates to several teachers and teacher associates with many years of experience. This difference in background seldom seemed to be an issue. Although once, during a lively dialogue about how and when to involve parents in a vision statement, one teacher with many years experience was distressed by a perceived lack of perspective of a younger teacher. Monty, an administrator, commented,

> In the inclusion of all staff members a young and inexperienced teacher can veto an idea like including stakeholders because of lack of experience or narrowed vision. It is interesting that teachers who appreciate being equal and a full partner in making decisions want to keep parents and students out. (RJ, Jan. 5)\(^2\)

For the most part, all staff members were accepted as equal partners in meeting the needs of students.

Many of the staff who had been at Inkonze the previous year prided themselves on having been a “team” that worked well together and that acted in a professional manner. Terri, an early years teacher who had been at Inkonze the proceeding year, believed that “last year the staff worked as a team” and she was “hopeful that they will again this year” (FI, Sept. 9)\(^3\). Lou, an experienced, upper years teacher, supported these assertions. “The staff works as a team. A lot of team teaching happens. They are supportive” (FI, Sept. 9). The principal reaffirmed this view by explaining, “The staff works together well as a team. They support each other. They are open about the way they feel in a professional way. The staff can air our concerns. The staff doesn’t take things personally” (FI, Sept. 9). But a few staff members felt that the way the decisions were made about the change initiative chosen for the current year might have undermined this team concept. Summer, a teacher associate, reported:

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\(^2\) This document is Monty’s entry in his reflective journal (RJ) written on January 5. All references to data taken from reflective journals follow a similar format. At times the reflective journal entries and interviews have been edited to delete information that could reveal the identity of the writer or other staff member. Precautions have been taken to edit only minimally and to retain the original intent.

\(^3\) This document is Terri’s first interview (FI) recorded on September 9. All references to data taken from first interviews will follow a similar format.
Last year when the principal announced a change some people didn’t like it and were asked to leave. The staff was divided but it’s better now. I am hopeful this process will bring the staff together because everyone has a voice. They didn’t feel safe at the end of last year to say how they were feeling. It will take time to build trust again and feel safe to ask questions. (FI, Sept. 9)

Sharon, who had worked at Inkonze for several years, even questioned the principal’s motivation for the proposed changes and wondered, “Is she on a power climb?” Even though these concerns were expressed, the staff was positive about the current year and hopeful that the new staff and new initiatives would result in growth and improvement. This positive view was reflected by Madeline, a new teacher:

I am impressed with the staff because the teachers in my family are all willing to work together. They are willing to share their ideas, knowledge, and space. They are willing to listen. There is a strong sense of collaboration in the family. (FI, Sept. 9)

This strong commitment to each other was in evidence throughout the study.

The Leadership

The principal had been at Inkonze for three years and the vice-principal was new to this school. These two administrators spent a great deal of time getting to know and understand each other. They discussed their roles and how to support each other and they debriefed after staff meetings as well.

Mary was introspective about her job as principal. She described her beliefs concerning leadership and proffered some thoughts she had about the administrative team. She said,

My basic assumption about leadership has changed in the last four years. I believe in shared leadership. My job is to manage people. The leader needs to give a picture of the school (climate) to the staff. The leader needs to be truthful, honest, and supportive, and model behaviour the leader wants others to display. The leader needs to be a risk taker. I am not sure of Monty’s style of leadership. I am not sure if he is the same kind of leader. But he is keen and enthusiastic. (SI, Nov. 5)

4 This document is Mary’s second interview (SI) recorded on November 5. All references to data taken from second interviews will follow a similar format.

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Monty was impressed with Mary’s leadership style and was anxious to learn from her. He explained,

Mary is very open and trusting. She is honest with feedback and is empowering. I feel my role is to learn from Mary. She has a lot to offer. I have read a lot about leadership and gender. I am wondering if the styles are different due to gender or other things. Women's style seems to be freedom and empowering while man’s seem to be power and control. I am working on freedom and empowerment. Sometimes I do well and other times not. I am hoping I will become less and less controlling. (SI, Nov. 13)

I was involved in several meetings with these two administrators and was struck by their professionalism in evaluating their role in the school and their discussions on ways they could help teachers meet the needs of students.

Staff recounted on numerous occasions their trust in the principal and their willingness to extend that same trust to the new vice-principal. Rosebud, a new support staff member, felt that the “leadership here is good” and she is “worried about Mary leaving” because she is Rosebud’s “security blanket” (SI, Nov.4). Ellen, an experienced, primary teacher, stated that Mary “is ethical and models that” and that she “sets the tone for the school” (FI, Sept. 4). Celeste, a teacher associate, summarized the thoughts of many staff members:

Mary and Monty complement each other. Monty has his own opinions and ideas. Together they have brought a strong administration. Together they make the best decisions for all. I trust them totally. In the past some administration has been by the books. Mary and Monty are concerned about the staff’s personal life as well as their school life. They are understanding.... Mary and Monty have good communication with the parents. The parents feel involved and well informed. They are both very approachable. I can talk to them when I need to. The staff is relaxed and comfortable. (SI, Nov. 19)

The staff was convinced that the administrator was pivotal to having a smooth running school. Sharon said, “Mary is not around enough. She is often at meetings. A principal sets the tone for the school and needs to be in the
building. The board expects principals to be away too much. Mary is doing an excellent job” (SI, Nov. 13). Red described his belief about the significance of leadership. He said,

Our leadership, usually the administrative team, is responsible for decisions. Administrators are chosen/promoted with leadership skills considered. Good leaders are good listeners. Good leaders learn how to make good decisions -- involving different processes.... Leadership is critical. Leadership involves listening, direction, and delegation. Effective dialogue and leadership is more about attitude and will than it is about structure. (TI, Jan. 27 & RJ, Nov. 7)

As a beginning teacher, Madeline appreciated being supported by the administrators. She said, “The leadership here is not power tripping. They enhance the program for the staff and students. When I talked to Mary about a problem, Mary listened but trusted me to solve the problem” (SI, Nov. 4). Shirla, a new teacher to the school, commented on her perception of the school leadership at various times during the project. During the first interview she said, “I give bouquets to the leadership in the school. They give me the opportunity to excel “(FI, Sept. 4). During the second interview she expounded on those original thoughts:

Monty has a gentle leadership style. He says specific things and offers direction but is kind. He gives good practical suggestions. Mary has a lot of vision and is very collaborative and open. She is willing to try new things and shares new opportunities. Together they make a good balance. They can help put you stay on the right track. They are trustworthy. (SI, Nov. 14)

The staff had high expectations of the administrators and were quite analytical about the role of administrators. Ellen, an experienced teacher, said,

I am not sure about Monty’s leadership because he is new. When I have worked with him, he has been very philosophical and wants to please. He wants to be liked and is good to the staff. But sometimes he needs to be more himself. He means well. Sometimes he is careful in what he says and does but at other times he is not. The hat issue is a concern. I am fearful that he might have the students introduce an issue to the staff that I
can’t support. Mary is very democratic and wants input and to be fair. She can take leadership when necessary. I like her style. She is ethical and trustworthy. When things need action she moves on them. (SI, Nov. 13)

Brown, a support staff member who works closely with the administrators, reported:

I really enjoy working with Mary. Mary is easy going and understands my job and how busy I am. Mary is very patient. I feel at times that I have gotten nothing done and Mary understands. Mary never demands. I realize not all employees (in other schools and organizations) are treated that way. I feel that Mary treats all of the staff well. I am just getting to know Monty. It will take time to know what he expects. He appreciates and recognizes my work. He always says thanks and shows appreciation. (SI, Nov. 14)

The words used repeatedly in journals, interviews, and informal discussions to describe Mary and Monty were approachable, flexible, relaxed, open, supportive, straightforward, warm, caring, honest, and down to earth. As well, the staff felt that Monty and Mary wanted what was best for students.

Having leadership that was ethical and trustworthy seemed to play an enormous part in providing an atmosphere in which teachers worked hard and were ethical and trustworthy. In fact, Lynne, a teacher who had come from a previous situation where the element of trust was lacking, stated, “The leadership in this school is 100% trustworthy and ethical. They are caring people. It makes me want to do a better job. The way I am treated makes me want to come to work” (SI, Nov. 5). The importance of the trusting relationship between the staff and the administrations surfaced many times in this study.

The Climate

Inkonze was a busy place that could be described as resembling an anthill. Parents came and went constantly, students were actively engaged in group activities in the classrooms, gym, hallways, and school grounds. Many
of the staff were at school by 8:00 a.m. and some as early as 7:30 a.m. and were at school as late as 5:00 p.m. or 5:30 p.m. During the day the staff were involved with teaching students or preparing for future lessons even during lunch hours and preparation times. Some of the comments staff made about their world were: “I am now full-time and feeling very overwhelmed. I am not finding time for myself and am feeling frazzled” (Sarah, RJ, Oct. 10); “At the beginning of the year teachers are swamped and it is hard to reflect” (Ellen, FI, Sept. 5); “Sometimes I get so busy that I forget others and I need to continue to realize that I am one of many” (Brown, FI, Sept. 4). These comments reflect the energy level that educating students at Inkonze School required. As well, a review of the weekly newsletters that were sent home to parents and the monthly reports which the community coordinator compiled revealed the myriad of activities made available to the students, parents, and community through the efforts of the staff. Some of these activities included the community association meetings, meetings with a consultant about special needs students, a staff breakfast, club meetings, field trips, suppers for the community, workshop opportunities, the Christmas program, and dates for reporting to parents.

In addition to all of these activities, the staff had agreed to pilot a new reporting procedure for the school system. Piloting this program involved several meetings for those who were the staff representatives. Several school meetings were also required so that they could explain the new method to the staff. Time and effort was required of all teachers to learn and evaluate the new reporting form.

Due to the high number of student behaviour problems, the previous year the staff had asked for and received permission from the school board to discontinue recesses and begin the school day at 9:10 a.m. rather than 9:00 a.m. and end the day at 3:10 p.m. rather than 3:30 p.m. As well, in an
attempt to meet the varied needs of the students, the staff had decided to use family groupings instead of grade levels in the primary years. Since the primary staff felt they had been better able to meet the need of students in the primary family group, the principal in consultation with the staff decided to implement the family concept throughout the school and Glasser’s Control Theory and Quality School concepts.

Communication

The way in which the staff communicated directly and indirectly impacted on everything that happened at the school. Communication was a topic that the staff discussed with me throughout the study. Their views ranged from feeling as if it were an area of excellence to feeling as if it were an arena that needed a great deal of work.

The formal forms of communication were monthly staff meetings, professional development in-services, weekly mini-staff meetings, monthly newsletters, and Monday memos from the principal. The more informal forms were a white board in the staffroom, notes placed in mailboxes, family meetings, and casual conversations.

In this particular school system, at the beginning of the school year staff meetings were held in all schools for the first day-and-a-half to decide, for the most part, how the school would be run for the year. Yearly committees were set up, class assignments were finalized, and administrators shared their expectations with the staff.

Monthly staff meetings were an expectation set by the school board and they were uniformly held across the system the first Thursday after the first Wednesday of each month so that they would be held after the principals’ meeting held the first Wednesday of each month. On staff meeting days, the students were dismissed at 2:00 p.m., a staff lunch began at 2:15 p.m., and
the meeting began at 2:30 p.m. The meeting, convened in the library, was intended to be a social gathering, information sharing, problem solving, decision making, and professional growth time. Each staff meeting was expected to have a thirty to forty-five minute professional development (PD) component. For the duration of this study, different aspects of the dynamic harmonization process were the major foci of these staff meeting PD activities. In consultation with the administrators, I did the major portion of the planning and implementation of these PD activities.

These monthly PD gambits were a part of the system expectation to provide staff with an opportunity to grow and develop professionally. Throughout the year there were also fourteen half-days set aside for these PD activities in all schools in this system. The break down for these days were two at the beginning of the school year and two days at the end of the school year, two for the yearly system-wide institute and convention, and the rest were equally divided between planning and PD days. Inkonze had the bonus of a full-day retreat in the fall due to its community school status.

In the past at Inkonze School, the administrators had set the agenda for the monthly staff meeting, led the meetings, and called for a vote when decisions were made. At the first staff meeting of this school year, the staff decided that they would use the dynamic harmonization process for all the monthly staff meetings at least until this study was completed. As a result of this decision, the staff from the opening of school had agreed on a completely new way to hold discussions and make decisions.

In addition to these monthly staff meetings, this school held a mini-staff meeting on the other Thursdays in the staffroom. These meetings were a staff initiative carried over from the previous year. The intent of these meetings was to keep everyone informed in a very informal fashion. The administrators would get the meeting started. We all sat in a circle, we each
shared about our week, gave information of interest to the staff, or simply said “pass” if we had nothing to say.

The white board and Monday memos were used to keep the staff up to date on changes in schedules, meetings that would take personnel out of the building, visitors to the school, staff who were sick, and special requests. The white board was located in the staffroom where people gathered informally to drink coffee and to connect with their colleagues. The memos were placed in everyone’s mailbox and also attached to the white board.

The staff’s thoughts concerning communication ranged from concerned to positive. Dana, who was an experienced primary teacher, explained, “The year before my leave the staff was very open and shared their concerns. But I am not sure if this is happening this year. I like the way Mary communicates with staff through the weekly newsletter and the messages on the white board” (FI, Sept. 9). Celeste, a support staff who had been at Inkonze for a long time, voiced the opposite view. She stated, “The staff’s strength is communication. Everyone is supportive and understanding” (FI, Aug. 30). Kalther, new to the school, echoed Celeste’s impression. He said, “I feel the strength of this staff is communication” (FI, Sept. 9).

The importance of communicating effectively was described by Kim, who had been at Inkonze for a few years. She believed, “If you don’t know about each others’ frustrations you may see someone as complaining rather than airing a legitimate concern” (FI, Sept. 9). Keeping the lines of communication open and functioning well was a problem for some of the part-time staff. Gina, a half-time teacher, defined the concerns, “I fail to hear some important information. I feel only half informed and don’t know how to solve the problem. Because of being in two schools, staff meetings are a problem as well. I am only able to attend every other meeting” (FI, Sept. 5).
In addition, some staff expressed concerns about the ad hoc manner in which family meetings were often held. Shirla felt, "Communication between and among the families could still improve. I am concerned about the wasted time due to failed communication. I feel the biggest issue for me now is communication" (SI, Nov. 14). Red, a support staff member, believed that improving communication was an important personal task as well. He conveyed, "The problem has been that I often feel like I am isolated. Now I feel more connected. Disconnectedness has been the history. Maybe the person I replaced didn't want to be involved in the same way. I need to take more responsibility to be more involved. I need to make myself more available" (TI, Jan. 27). The person-to-person communication as well as the way in which the staff communicated resulted in the development of some of the difficulties and successes that we experienced in implementing this new decision making process.

Change Initiatives

The family groupings consisted of each teacher having multiple grade levels in the classroom. There were two grade 1/2 teachers; each teacher had grade 1/2 students in the room. There were three grade 3/4/5 teachers; each teacher has all three grade levels in the classroom. The same arrangement was true for the three grade 6/7/8 teachers. The change from grade levels to family groups meant that the students would have the same teacher for two years in the primary age group with the exception of the kindergarten students who would have their teacher for one year. The students in the middle and upper years would have their teachers for three years. As well, half to two thirds of the student population in each family would remain the same for two to three years. The change to family groups was intended to build stronger teacher-to-student relationships and student-to-student
relationships. Family groupings were also intended to enable teachers to meet the academic requirements of the students more effectively since many were well behind the “normal” grade level in many subject areas.

Implementing Glasser’s (1990) Control Theory and Quality School concepts involved the staff rethinking their assumptions about teaching and using new techniques for meeting their students’ needs. The basis of Glasser’s Control Theory is:

All human beings are born with five basic needs built into their genetic structure: survival, love, power, fun, and freedom. All of our lives we must attempt to live in a way that will best satisfy one or more of these needs. Control Theory is a descriptive term because we try to control our own behavior so that what we choose to do is the most need-satisfying thing we can do at the time. (pp. 43-44)

Glasser (pp. 177-178) described quality as: (1) a product of warm, caring human relationships; (2) always useful in some way; (3) the best that everyone can achieve; (4) always being possible to be improved; and (5) always feeling good.

Glasser (p. 187) also stated that in a Quality School the students will say that they like school and that they are learning things that they believe are good for them. The teacher will say that they like working in “this friendly school,” that they are treated like a professional, that they are pleased with the new way to evaluate students, and that they no longer think about discipline problems (Glasser, p. 187). Glasser (pp. 187-190) also lists practices that are to be followed: (1) “Staff and students are friends;” (2) “There will be no nonsense taught or tested for;” (3) “From K through 12th grade,” there is emphasis on basic skills and problem solving;” (4) Other subjects are taught the way teachers feel are best; (5) “All will be asked to evaluate all of their work for quality;” (6) “All tests will be open book;” (7) “As long as students work to improve, any grade can be raised;” (8) “A corps of good students will be trained to serve as tutors for any student who needs one-
on-one tutoring;” (9) “There will be no busywork, and therefore, no compulsory homework in a Quality School;” and (10) “All teachers and all students will be taught Control Theory.” He summarized what a Quality School is by stating what the message from the staff has to be.

We run a caring school; teach useful skills and knowledge; give all a chance to improve what they do and, therefore, to succeed; talk to the students in a warm and friendly way; teach them and encourage them to work together; demonstrate that we know what we are doing and believe that it is good both for them and for us; and try as hard as we can to persuade them to begin to do quality work. In this school, the staff does not fail anyone; any student who is willing to work will ultimately succeed. We are aware of fun and plan to help them to have as much fun as possible in what they do everyday and also in planning enjoyable school activities. We also will always work with them to make what rules we all agree we need and change any rule that is not working. (pp. 277-278)

Glasser’s ideals meant that the teacher had not only to revise the language they used but to the look at their school in a totally different way.

Both the change to family groups and Glasser’s Quality School resonated with many staff. While they recognized that these changes were, for the most part, chosen by the principal, the staff came to believe in the value of each innovation. Sarah, a teacher who had been at Inkonze for a few years, explained, “The Quality School workshop was life changing for me. I used to believe being competent was the most important thing, but now I know it is the relationship with the students. Students need to have the feeling of confidence and self-worth” (FI, Sept. 5). Madeline, a teacher new to the school, said, “I feel that attending the Control Theory workshop was worthwhile and was an excellent opportunity to get to know other staff members better” (RJ, Sept. 23). A teacher associate, Celeste described her thoughts. “The whole school has focused on the same thing for Quality Schools. Many wondered how much they would have to change. But after the workshop and the discussions we all are working together. Now when we talk to another school [staff] we tell them that Quality School is what they need to
be doing” (TI, Jan. 27)\footnote{This document is Celeste’s third interview (TI) recorded on January 23. All references to data taken from third interviews will follow a similar format.}.

The principal explained her view of the reasons the staff were willing to accept these two initiatives: “The Control Theory initiative and family groups were both staff ideas. Teachers who didn’t support the idea decided for various reason to transfer. Those coming in knew what we were planning” (FI, Sept. 9). Whatever their initial reasons were, the staff worked very hard to implement the family groupings, the Quality School concept, and the use of dynamic harmonization, my research project, in the school.

**Summary**

If a story is to be understood and appreciated, then the set and the characters need to be introduced in a way that gives the reader a full view of that world. In this chapter I have provided a description of Inkonze School and the staff who work there. The reader will now be better able to discern and evaluate what has taken place in this study. I have noted the complexity of the reality of attempting to meet the needs of the students of Inkonze. The culture in which the staff lived and worked directly influenced the way they thought about and made decisions. The story of the use of dynamic harmonization begins to unfold in the next chapter as I describe how the staff and I work through the process.
CHAPTER FIVE
DESCRIPTION AND SENSE MAKING

Description...is at the heart of qualitative inquiry. If we could just get the description right -- which we never do -- ours would be the noblest of scientific achievements. When we do not get much of it right, then what “follows” does not follow at all, and we render our efforts at field-based research nothing more than self-validating and very time-consuming exercises. (Wolcott, 1994, pp. 55-56)

In an effort to “get it right,” I described what the consociates at Inkonze experienced using their words, metaphors, and vignettes. But in presenting this description I was conscious of Wolcott’s (1994) words: “It requires not only a sense of what to observe and report but exquisite judgment about what not to report, a keen sense of what is focus, what is periphery, and how to maintain a perspective and balance between them” (p. 56). I realized that what I left out was as important to the story as what I included. Therefore, in the spirit of needing to assess the description for “its relevance and contribution to the story” (p. 57), I attempted to reveal to the reader the adventure on which the staff at Inkonze embarked from the beginning. In so doing, I endeavoured to provide the reader with a format for making sense of the story. The narrative of the happenings at Inkonze are presented by answering the questions highlighted in Chapter One.

My sojourn at Inkonze began in the spring of 1996 when I contacted the Deputy Director of a large urban school division to find out if the school division would allow me to conduct an action research project using a new decision making model in one of their schools. I requested a school that had already decided to implement a second-order change. He responded positively and gave me the name of a principal of a school. From that point on, the tale
What Did DH Look Like in the School?

In an effort to represent accurately the way in which the DH (dynamic harmonization) process looked in the school, the metaphors that the staff used to explain what they were experiencing are used here as descriptive headings. Monty, the vice-principal, commented in this third interview that DH at the beginning was a new beast. The way this new beast emerged for the staff was a complex and fascinating process. The consociates and I shaped the beast as we traveled together.

The New Beast

During the initial phone conversation Mary, the principal, was reluctant to become involved in another change initiative (in addition to the two already chosen plus piloting the new reporting system). After reading my proposal of the action research project, she became quite enthusiastic about the possible benefits that DH held for the staff in implementing their chosen changes. She invited me to make a presentation to the staff who would be working at Inkonze the following year to ascertain their willingness to become involved in this project. At 3:30 p.m. on a school day at the end of May I presented a fifteen minute overview of my proposal to all the staff members. At the end of the presentation I invited and answered questions for another fifteen minutes. While the staff was fairly reserved with their questions and comments, they indicated that they would discuss their involvement in the project and then Mary would inform me of their decision.

The following week Mary informed me that everyone was in agreement about becoming involved in the research project. At that time, Mary and I set a date to discuss how the introduction of DH would be handled at the beginning
of the school year.

During our meeting a few days before the teachers were to return to school, Mary, Monty, and I met and decided that my presentation of DH would be first on the agenda so that some initial questions about DH and its use could be addressed by the staff. My reflections and notes revealed how nervous I was about my reception and the acceptance of my ideas by the staff.

Tomorrow my research begins. I am quite concerned about the way my ideas will be received. The principal and the vice-principal are very supportive and have agreed to allow me to present dynamic harmonization at the beginning of the first staff meeting. I hope the staff is receptive. (I did a short presentation of my ideas in the spring. The one concern seemed to be the time commitment of reflective journaling.) I hope my ideas for making time for reflective journaling will help somewhat. I hope the staff is accepting of me as a newcomer. (FNR, Aug. 21)\(^6\)

My concerns proved to be unfounded as the staff was most welcoming and professional in their response to me and to the undertaking which we were to commence. My notes revealed the positive beginning to this project. “The presentation of my process and our involvement together in action research was well received. Of those attending the meeting, all but one of the staff signed the sheet to be a part of the project. That staff member is a part-time specialist who is leaving in two months due to pregnancy. Other staff not involved in the study were the two evening caretakers, a support staff member who was at the school only one afternoon a week, an intern, and a teacher associate who was added to the staff late in September. Twenty-two staff were actively involved in the study (see Appendix A.) There were clarifying questions asked. But I perceived no negative reactions” (FNR, Aug. 22).

At the end of my presentation I asked three questions which needed to be addressed by the staff. The first was when will we use this process? Some

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\(^6\) This document is my field notes and reflections (FNR) on August 21. All references to data taken from my field notes and reflections will follow a similar format.
concerns were raised about whether to use DH in smaller committee meetings. Some teachers were worried about the process slowing down decision making and the need for a recorder. Others said that the more they practice trying DH the better they would understand it, use it, and evaluate it.

During the ensuing discussion, I noted how difficult it was for this group to reflect on ideas and for the more outgoing people to wait for the more reticent ones to have a say. I also noted the discomfort of many people during periods of silence. They were squirming, looking around, and doodling on their papers.

The decision was reached to use DH at staff meetings. They also decided that if they were comfortable with the process they would use it during smaller meetings. The second question concerned how to signal disagreement. The discussion ranged from how can we give someone veto power to the need for three levels of agreement. They decided on three levels of agreement. First, "I agree." Second, "I disagree but will support the idea." The third, "I disagree and the decision will be stopped for now." The third question was, how long do we want to give this process a try? Agreement was reached fairly quickly that they would use the process with no end date set and change it as there was a need. They said, "We will bring up concerns or signal to Jayne our concerns through our reflective journals or anonymously on a slip of paper that Jayne will provide" (SMN, Aug.22)7 I also requested that they end each staff meeting by spending a few minutes writing in the reflective journals and that the recorder read the decisions made so that everyone could make any corrections or clear up any misunderstandings at that meeting.

That was the beginning; from this point on the staff and I were actively involved in molding DH to fit this staff at this particular time. We experienced numerous highs and lows in this process. Some of the lows could have been

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7This document is the staff meeting notes (SMN) recorded on August 22. All references to data taken from staff meeting notes will follow a similar format.
devastating except for the professional attitude of the staff. The highs were validation for the time and effort we all spent honing this process to fit Inkonze school.

There was never a typical staff meeting. The staff meeting of September 5 was one of the most trying for everyone (see Appendix B). It was long, one topic took up the majority of the meeting, only tentative decisions were reached, and reflection time was disregarded for the majority of the meeting. The staff meeting on February 6 was very different (see Appendix C). During this meeting there were many, major decisions made, reflection time was evident, and the new "clerk" style of leadership was used. The feelings of the staff concerning these meetings were reflected in their journal entries. In their journals for September 5 the staff reported frustration and disappointment but also a willingness to try again (see Appendix D), while in the entries for February 6 they noted optimism and feelings of accomplishment (see Appendix E).

From the outset, many staff members felt that DH had the potential of meeting their needs. Rosebud, new to the staff this year, commented, "It is about as close as you can come to pleasing everyone. Some people always seem to dominate a discussion. DH reminds them not to dominate. They have a hard time giving up the power. DH makes people stop and think instead of interrupting or going back to their own idea" (FL, Sept. 3). Similar views were held by Ellen, a teacher with many years of experience. "I like the DH process. Thinking time before you talk shows respect for different opinions. We tend to speak before we think. When the staff was discussing the supervision schedule, the group didn't follow DH. This showed that decisions go better when we follow DH" (FL, Sept.5).

In fact, the people that seemed to be the most enthusiastic about DH in these beginning stages were the ones who were quiet and seldom spoke at
meetings. Some of the comments were: “DH gives me a chance to say I don’t like something. Now I am comfortable saying I don’t agree. You can express yourself without a label” (Celeste, FI, Aug. 30); “I like reflective time because not everyone can respond quickly so it helps put everyone on an equal basis” (Madeline, SI, Nov. 14); “It is hard for me to articulate my ideas. I need the reflection time to think” (Naomi, FI, Sept. 3).

While most of the staff members embraced DH, there were others who disliked the changes that DH was promoting. One teacher remarked that she did not like the idea of only speaking about an idea once and not repeating an idea that had already been presented because she felt that she could state an idea better than anyone else. There was also one teacher who felt efficiency was of the utmost importance and often made derogatory, jesting comments about finding consensus.

Monty, an experienced teacher, wrote in his journal at the beginning of the year, “I wonder if reflective time is a waste of time. It seemed unnatural. Reflecting time may be calming or it may put some people out of focus (asleep). I feel that the decision making process dragged” (RJ, Aug. 22). At the end of the project he stated,

Looking back on DH there were frustrating moments. Now I can’t sit through a meeting without being able to say “I agree”, or “disagree and can live with the decision” or “can’t live with the decision.” Now we have more concise meetings. We are not limited. I have come to despise voting because it leaves people out. DH is not compromise; it is looking for the unseen solution; look for what satisfies all. The benefit is becoming more reflective. I ask myself if I need to comment. DH can make things go faster. There is no longer win/lose and there are no longer positions of power. (TI, Jan. 31)

Some of the frustrations that were encountered had to do with the use of time. Time was an issue with which we dealt throughout the study. At one point, early in the study the principal was quite concerned with time and the problem of discussing all the issues that needed attention in one staff meeting.
Looking back, even a short time later, she could see some benefit in using the DH process.

I was quite upset about decisions taking so long. That was on the 4th [of September]. Now on the 22nd I feel that while one person dominated the meeting, I was able to understand that person's motivation. I feel we learned from that meeting and won't let it happen again. I respect differences and respect the choices others make” (RJ, Sept. 23).

Dana, an early years teacher, often reported feeling that the meetings were way too long and that if she “just kept quiet” the meetings might be over sooner. The structure seemed to get in the way and that the rules were rigid (SI, Nov. 14). Terri, who worked closely with Dana, echoed her thoughts. She related, “The negative side of DH is that people are dreading meetings. Sometimes we are frustrated by the way meetings are dragging on” (SI, Nov. 4).

At the end of the study Mary, among others, had changed her mind about time being a negative component of DH. She described her thoughts,

DH helped us get organized.... People are feeling better about the way decisions are made. They have more say and are not just saying yes or no. DH has helped flatten the hierarchy. People feel they can have a say and they do. I think the benefit of DH is having a decision making process in place for the big decisions. But when the decision really affects the teachers then we have a process so that we are better able to decide. If we see a stumbling block we can ask to have a reflective meeting about the issue. I think that will help us save a lot of time. (TI, Feb.3)

During the initial phase, we had worked on using our time differently and more effectively. After six months of use, the staff's reflections in their final journal entries highlighted the effectiveness of the changes in our beast. Lynne, one of the new teachers, wrote, “Today’s meeting was excellent! I felt that it was well run. Ellen was an excellent leader and people were succinct. Lots was decided” (RJ, Fe. 6). Her thoughts were similar to Lou and Gina’s, who are teachers that have been at Inkonze for a few years. Lou reflected, “I think the staff meeting went quite well. I didn’t feel frustrated at the end like I
have in the past. Maybe we have perfected DH to suit our needs! I hope so!” (RJ, Feb. 6). Gina responded, “Good meeting today. Felt that the meeting went really well -- well run. Ellen did a great job. Lots of issues were resolved - - lots were information ones but still they were settled. Good feeling in the air - - very relaxed” (RJ, Feb. 6).

I had implemented reflective groups (see Appendix F) so that questions and concerns that surfaced as the study progressed could be examined in a small group context and then suggestions and recommendation would be presented to the whole staff. These reflective groups were provided so that the staff could each be involved in problem solving in a small group setting. As well, these groups helped keep the staff from “talking in circles” in staff meetings and gave each staff member equal access to the problem solving process. I used the reflective journals as well as my own observations from staff meetings and casual conversation to decide when reflective meetings needed to be called and what the tentative agenda for the meetings should be. These reflective meetings involved any or all of the plan, act, observe, reflect stages of the action research process. Participation was voluntary in these groups but I did ask that everyone become involved in one reflective group during the study.

As a result of the decision reached in the January staff meeting to continue DH, the fifth and final reflective group dealt with questions having to do with the continued use of DH after the research had been completed. The questions this group answered were: How do we decide when to use or not use DH? What do we need to have in place so that DH can continue in a beneficial fashion? Do we need to continue with reflective groups? If so, how are they struck and who participates? Who will be responsible for updating new members of the staff about DH? The recommendations of this group were: (1) At staff meetings the time between 2:15 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. will be used for
visiting and socializing. (2) DH will be used for major decisions in staff meetings. The small decisions will be listed as information (on sheet given for reading) and if a staff member wishes to dialogue about one they will have the opportunity to say so. (3) The leader of the dialogue needs to limit the amount people speak. They will do so by signaling (each leader to decide how this is done) to someone that they are speaking too long or are off topic. The leader will be selective in calling on those wishing to speak so that many people will have the opportunity to speak. (4) Reflective groups will be formed if there are many people bringing multiple ideas and no consensus is being reached or when there is a decision that someone cannot “live with and support.” The group will be formed at the time the issue is raised and membership and chair are voluntary. (5) A mentoring system will be set up so that new members will have someone to help them understand the culture of Inkonze (MRG, Feb. 6)\(^8\). These recommendations were accepted at the February staff meeting with little comment.

Nan’s comments as a member of the reflective group underlined the comfort that the staff members were feeling with DH and the way they had forged the new beast into a useful workhorse. She wrote, “Excellent reflective meeting this AM. I am very impressed by how much more effective collaborative planning is. I’m learning so much from the others” (RJ, Feb. 6).

**How Did the Process of DH Unfold in the School?**

While we did forge DH into a process that fit Inkonze well, there were numerous times when all of us felt like we were doing the traditional “one step forward and two backward.” Gina’s comment during one of the periods of frustration was that she would “wait and see and keep her ears open” (FI, Sept. 5). Her statement mirrored well what I was seeing and hearing from the

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\(^8\) This document is from the minutes of the fifth reflective group (MRG) on February, 6. All references to data taken from the minutes of reflective groups will follow a similar format.
staff. The willingness to wait and see and “hang in there” stood us in good stead while muddling through this change process.

**Wait and See and Keep Your Ears Open**

Our cycles of planning, acting, reflecting, and planning again were not as discrete as I had at first envisioned. Often we were planning, acting, and reflecting at the same meeting. As well, our reflecting would at times lead us into areas about which we had not actively planned. We often needed to be reminded of the theory of DH and to study what various concepts meant. In a school setting, stopping to reflect and study when the need is recognized is not always possible. We would reflect on the run and study issues and concepts when PD activity time had been assigned by the school system. Figure 5 shows our loops and the major activities in each loop. Activity 17 was the last one in the study but since the use of DH continued at Inkonze so did the loop. Therefore, 17 began a new loop for the staff to complete on their own. The significance of the activities will become apparent as the findings are revealed (see Appendix G for a list of all the activities in the study and Appendix H for the chronological order of activities).

As I have indicated, the beginning of this study went very well. Everyone appeared to be on-side and seemed to understand the basic concepts in DH. One of the initial problems with which we had to deal was the difficulty of reflecting during the meeting. The need to listen to someone else before formulating a response proved to be a difficult skill to acquire. I had suggested that we all count to five before speaking. The staff had agreed to try this idea.

Our monthly staff meeting in September proved to be the first huge stumbling block. Staff meetings at Inkonze usually lasted two hours. This meeting lasted well over three hours and no decisions were made. Later I
Figure 5. The double loop learning activities.

discovered through causal conversations that some staff members had gone home and cried and that there were numerous phone calls between friends to discuss the “chaotic” staff meeting. The feelings of everyone were expressed very well by the journal entries of Monty, Celeste, and Summer. Monty wrote, “I found the staff meeting extremely frustrating. I am also angry. I wonder why? Are people talking too fast? I feel they are making decisions without thinking about the kids. I feel I may have to interrupt or count faster” (RJ, Sept. 9). Celeste put it succinctly, “Time spent on the computers [discussion] is ridiculous” (RJ, Sept. 5). Summer pinpointed the reflection time as the problem, “It seems everyone is trying to remember the 5 sec. rule but it is not
working" (RJ, Sept. 5).

I went home that night feeling guilty and responsible for wasting everyone's time, and I was questioning why I had thought this process would work. When I arrived at the school the next day I expected to be met with open hostility, instead I was warmly greeted by several staff members, many of whom commented that the problems at the staff meeting were caused because they had failed to follow the elements of DH. My reflections included questions and concerns:

This staff meeting went an hour over time because they were using DH rather than voting. One person dominated the discussion.... I am wondering if (1) the person doesn't trust the others to make a good decision, (2) that person wants his/her own way at all cost, (3) dominating is a habit that that person doesn't realize he/she has, (4) he/she is on a power trip, (5) there is a turf battle going on.... My concerns are: It seems 5 sec. are not enough to encourage true reflection; Reflection for many is not happening; We need to limit the number of times we speak; Many are not speaking at all; and decisions are forced. I was pleased on Friday that the teachers I spoke to were not angry with me or with DH but were saying the domination [we witnessed] is not new and they continue to be hopeful that DH is a way out of it. (FNR, Sept. 6)

My reflections and discussions with several staff members prompted me to write the first of several letters to the staff about where we were and where I could sense we were going. Some of the highlights of this letter were;

I am very glad you didn't lynch me yesterday after the staff meeting. I am sure everyone felt frustrated and concerned to some degree. After I arrived home, put up my feet, and REFLECTED!!, a few thoughts came to me that I would like to share with you. First, change theorists tell us that in order to make significant changes, we must go through a period of chaos. I believe Thursday's meeting could be accurately described as chaotic. Soooo, we are making progress!! even if it feels awkward and counter-productive at times. Second, I would like to have the first reflective meeting to discuss some of the issues surrounding the dynamic harmonization (DH) process in relation to the happenings at the staff meeting. (SL, Sept. 6)9

As suggested in the letter, we held our first reflective meeting where we dealt

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9 This document is from the letter I wrote to the staff (SL) on September, 6. All references to data taken from the letters I wrote to the staff will follow a similar format.
with several issues that became reoccurring themes for us. The questions that we addressed were: (1) Do we need to level decision making? Do some questions not need to be addressed by the whole staff? (2) How do we improve our listening skills, encourage quiet people to speak, value different viewpoints? (3) What do we do when it is obvious that we are talking in circles? Who steps in? What should the role of leadership be? (4) Should we share leadership of meetings as we share recorder? (MRG, Sept. 30).

Learning how to listen to each other and coming to an understanding of what kind of leadership was most beneficial for the group were finally sorted out. While the process was difficult and time consuming, many staff found that they did a great deal of growing and changing in the process. Our struggles in learning to listen were incorporated in our developing an understanding of the difference between discussion and dialogue and learning not to debate but to give our ideas as gifts. The statements of Nan, a teacher with experience at many schools, showed the most dramatic change in this area. In November she stated, “I like a good argument. Sometimes it is good to disagree and be opinionated. DH wants to include everyone and needs to accept everyone’s ideas. When you are with friends you can have a heated discussion” (SI, Nov. 24) At the end of the study, in discussing what DH had come to mean to her, she said that she had always thought before that anyone who did not speak did not have anything to say. Now she realized that in debates many people had felt excluded. She concluded by saying, “The important part of the project for me was seeing how consensual decision making empowers” (TI, Jan. 27). Monty stated his convictions quite strongly, Some of us miss disagreements. When you are good at winning arguments, it is hard to give it up. Some people build their ‘self esteem by the notches in the post. Of course, that means someone else lost. That is damaging. You can say a good political argument is fun, but there is a down-side -- that means there is a loser. Then there are two losers; if one loses both lose. We really can’t win if the other loses. (TI, Jan. 31)
Appreciating the need for all to be winners was a vital step in learning to dialogue; first we had to learn to truly listen.

By the time we reached the staff meeting in February we had developed a role for the DH leader. The procedures for the leader to follow were: read the guidelines for DH at the beginning of the meeting, keep the dialogue on track (focused), recognize those who have signaled a wish to speak by raising their hand, keep input by any one person to a reasonable length of time, and have decisions reached read at the end of the meeting. The development of the leadership structure was an excellent example of the action research spiral. We tried several methods, examined them, reflected on what worked and what did not, then tried again. I was asked to model what I saw as being appropriate for the leader in one meeting and Ellen commented on the process. She saw a distinct improvement as we continued to hone our view of the leader. She sensed that “there seemed to be a sigh of relief when people were reminded to wait their turn to speak. Jayne was more assertive in leadership this time” (SI, Nov. 13). Gina detailed some of the frustrations we experienced. She wrote:

Some people are getting frustrated about the process. It is OK to talk the talk but the doing is another thing. I am hearing different viewpoints about the leadership issue. Some like the idea of the leader cutting off people and moving on -- taking control of the meeting. Is there anyone who doesn’t agree with that? That is something I’d like to address at the reflective meeting. (RJ, Oct. 24)

Address it we did, until we got it right. In fact, Rosebud likened learning DH to learning to parallel park. “Becoming familiar with the process is like parallel parking. You have to practice a lot and then it becomes a habit” (FI, Sept. 3).

No Pain, No Gain

The fun factor became an area of discontent for many people. The fact that many felt that DH had taken the humour out of the meetings was a
concern for us all. Sarah, an outspoken leader in the school, stated, "The process and the people make for tension and lack of humour. I feel I am not doing my part if I make 'off the cuff' comments. We are all aware of what we should be doing. I don't make the comments now that I would have [made last year]" (SI, Nov. 1). Lack of fun in the meetings was seen differently by some. Ellen, who seemed to take a more moderate stand on many issues, felt that dealing with this issue was just one more step in learning DH. "I think we need to look at how we do things. No pain, no gain" (TI, Jan. 30). There was pain because changing is difficult and laborious at times.

There were numerous views on the fun factor. Lou, an upper years teacher, stated very plainly that she believed a sense of humour was important. She explained, "It is a good coping technique. I am not comfortable with someone who can't laugh" (FI, Sept. 9). Dana's idea reflected the middle ground. She felt, "Now everyone feels there is a time to have a say and a time for fun. While we had more fun before DH maybe we were not as productive" (SI, Nov. 14). Even as the study was ending, the fun element had not been handled to everyone's satisfaction. Lynne noted, "The staff seems divided on DH. Most people like the philosophy but they are still saying that it is not fun. I am wondering why we are struggling so much. I would like to keep going until it becomes second nature so that it is not so much work (TI, Feb. 3).

A reflective group had addressed the fun factor earlier when we dealt with how to communicate better. At that time the solution was suggested and adopted that the staff would make a concerted effort to go to the staffroom at 8:50 a.m. each morning to have time to socialize. While many felt as Red, a support staff, did that this time helped cut down on feelings of isolation, it had not solved the whole problem. Therefore, when the fifth reflective group met we dialogued about the fun factor in addition to the other
issues mentioned earlier. The conclusions reached were that:

staff meetings in the past were not always fun. We are being a bit
nostalgic about them (selective memory?). Staff meetings before
DH did not necessarily produce decisions. We were so busy having
laughs that we forgot to get our business done. The morning time
(8:55 a.m.), socials, and 2:15-2:30 p.m. (staff meeting days) are
the times for socializing and having laughs. (RM, Feb. 6)

I was a bit concerned that these statements might be seen by some as “put
downs.” But when these ideas were presented at the staff meeting everyone
said that they agreed with them. Maybe the concerns over having fun in the
meetings have been assuaged.

How Did the Staff Use DH in the Group Setting?
The staff, early in the study, agreed to use DH in their monthly staff meetings
but did not seem to be using it in their family or committee meetings. But as
the study progressed more people began reporting using the basic elements of
DH in school meetings and in other places as well. It seemed that DH was
becoming second nature for many. Early in the study Monty noted,
“Everyone seems to agree that something needs to change and DH seems to
be the ticket” (RJ, Sept. 21). The staff did, indeed, appear to have decided
that DH was their ticket for making better decisions in many different places.

The Ticket

The use of DH and the perceived need for DH in various forums was
highlighted by numerous staff members. Sarah noted, “I really do not like
voting. I went to an STA meeting and saw the need for being minuted as
opposed. I believe that it is affirming to say I disagree with the decision but
can live with it” (SI, Nov. 1). Mary described situation at Inkonze where a
discussion had broken down into a power and control battle in a meeting that
she did not attend. She recounted, “I was asked to intervene and I suggested
using DH. It worked well for them and the differences were resolved. I felt the
team spirit was reestablished” (FI, Sept. 23). Lou said, “I am making an effort to use the five second reflecting time in other places than just staff meetings. I am working on really listening to other people” (RJ, Sept. 23). Kirsten said, “I didn’t realize how much we are using DH format in our meetings until I attended a meeting conducted in the traditional way. I was very frustrated. Things went in circles and the same points were made repeatedly. They voted and the majority ruled. Many people were frustrated. The same few people dominated the discussion and have been for a long time” (RJ, Oct. 30). Lynne noted, “I love the process. I use it even at home. I have a blended family so it is important to disagree but learn to live together” (SI, Nov. 5). Rosebud (RJ, Oct. 24) attended a meeting she felt was “way too long due to power struggles.” She thought it would be great to go over DH with them.

Madeline believed that it made a difference for the school as a whole. She remarked, “The community school benefited from DH. The senior kids used it more. Hopefully they went home and shared it with their families. It would be good to use DH in the community association. People there need to learn about giving up power and control. It would be good if they could see the other side. Using DH would be beneficial in many areas” (TI, Jan. 30). Once the teachers recognized the benefits of DH for themselves they wanted to share the process with their students.

I was asked to help teach the DH process in four classrooms. Monty and I taught the grade 6/7/8 students the process. Initially these students expressed a lack of appreciation for their ability to make important changes in their world. Monty felt that DH was an important concept for them to learn so that they could develop a power base to make effective decisions and bring about changes that mattered to them. While building an understanding of the process was slow going at times (“why don’t we just vote?”), to this point
the students have used the process in two endeavours to change their world at school. The first was an attempt to acquire a “pop” machine for their area. At a parent council meeting, the parents narrowly voted the students’ idea down. The experience gave the students some strong reasons to like DH and reject voting. They expressed a strong desire to try again on another issue. A few days later, these students requested that the staff allow them to wear hats in the school. This same issue concerning hats had been raised and voted down by the staff the previous year. This year, using DH, approximately five teachers stated that they did not agree with the decision but that they could live with it and the rest agreed with the decision. Monty reported,

It gave the students voice and let the staff have voice as well. This was the first time students were able to influence others and change something important to them. When the students found out the outcome, the other students cheered and clapped for the two who presented. (SI, Nov. 13).

Other teachers used the reflection time and encouraged improved listening skills in their classes. Terri, an early years teacher, recounted, “I am encouraging my students to reflect about questions in class as well. I have noticed that this is giving more students an opportunity to respond” (RJ, Sept. 22). Kirsten, a middle years teacher, used DH in the classroom and she felt the students were happier and that they felt an important part of the group. “The feeling of acceptance of any viewpoint was evident” (RJ, Sept. 26). The findings of this study support the casual observation that I have heard on numerous occasions; when teachers experience a positive process they want to share that process with their students.

DH was becoming for all of us a way of life not just a way to make decisions. But for all the positive aspects of DH there were some down sides as well. Schools are a multifaceted organizations and many factors impact on their culture.
What Conditions Affected the Use of DH?

DH was not attempted in a sterile environment. There were many conditions that affected the staff and therefore the use of DH. These conditions ranged from individual to collective and personal to school wide.

What Rocks the Boat

Kim, a very introspective teacher who was taking a university class, shared her thoughts on both a personal and school level when she stated,

I am taking a class on group processes. A lot of things have come up from this project.... I am feeling very positive about the research. I think it went very smoothly. I realize that I am very much a no conflict person. I didn't realize how much that was true before. I really do hate conflict. But that is not a good thing. If I can avoid it I will. I don't ever want to cause conflict. I don't want to rock the boat. I have a feeling that not everybody bought into the research. At least not as much as some of us did. If we continue using DH we will have to be more committed. That will be very difficult. (TI, Jan. 29)

Others shared how the problems all educators experience in educating students affected them. The importance of trusting relationships and trustworthy leadership as Kouzes and Posner (1993), Bennis (1989), and O'Toole (1995) emphasize was highlighted at various points throughout the study. Sharon, a teacher associate, was concerned with positions of power that exists in all schools. Even though she felt that the administrators in this school were completely trustworthy, she wondered, "There is still power within the school. I don't know how comfortable someone is with talking about your true feelings with someone who has power over your job; does an evaluation of you" (TI, Feb. 5). As stated earlier, the busy life of an educator was emphasized by Ellen when she talked about feeling swamped (FI, Sept. 5). Brown, a support staff, noted that the staff is influenced by what happens in their day. "Everything that happens outside the office impacts on me and my reactions. If I have a bad day, I don't react as well as when I have a good day"
(FI, Sept. 4). Never having enough time to do what needs to be done is a chronic problem in education. The implementation of DH was no exception. Kalther, an intern, summarized this problem when he commented about the beginning of the school year, “DH isn’t working now because of time constraints and all the chaos in the school at this time” (FI, Sept. 9).

Each person’s history had an impact on their reception of and reaction to DH. Lynne recounted previously having been in a place both personally and professionally that was less than affirming. She explained,

Decision making is hard for me. Dynamic harmonization is a new tool. I don’t like to rock the boat so it is a bit frightening. I don’t know if I can go against the group because I wouldn’t want to stop the process. Decisions have always been hard for me. It is a life long problem. I feel I must make the correct decision so I tend to leave decisions too long. Then I must make them under pressure or let others decide. It is hard to change. (FI, Sept. 9)

The support staff were often quiet in meetings. I was concerned about their lack of participation. Sharon’s perception was that “in other places TA are treated differently. They are sometimes told not to participate. So past history may be some of the reason they are quiet” (SI, Nov. 13).

Summer, a teacher associate, revealed that interpersonal relations were affecting her willingness to participate in discussions. She explained,

I am very willing to talk in most groups but not here. I am not sure why. I don’t feel that it is DH. I think it has something to do with group dynamics. I have noticed that I have been somewhat fearful, but I am not sure why. I feel that all the staff need to remember that if they have something bothering them they owe it to the person to talk to them, not to others. That happens everywhere. I need to remember that myself. (SI, Nov. 25)

Of course, in any change initiative there is always the issue of the status quo. Change is frightening. Mary said it very well, “Some people want things the way they have always been done” (SI, Nov. 5). Red, as did many staff members, echoed her sentiments. “Status quo is always hard to change” (TI, Jan. 27).

Terri highlighted the influence the various personality types have on
the process. "The day after the staff meeting I went to an in-service and did an activity with personality types. I wonder if you get a compromise or consensus if one person thinks their idea is correct and nothing else will do. If there are people like that, how do you get the ideas and gifts of others? How do we get harmony?" (FI, Sept. 9). The way different personality types could affect the group was a concern for Madeline as well. She noted,

I was watching a TV talk show the other day and noticed how one woman dominated the conversation. I thought how hard it would be to have effective decision making with someone like that around. She was arguing and coming down on anyone who disagreed. DH cuts through the "bull shit" and gets to the concrete issues. (TI, Jan. 30)

The number of change initiatives that Inkonze staff was attempting to implement also directly influenced their ability to implement these changes. The principal voiced some regrets about having so many new initiatives being tried at the same time and expressed her own responsibility for what had taken place. Mary said,

I think we had too many things going on -- too many initiatives. I couldn’t give DH as much of my time as I would have liked. It would have been better if I had more time to commit. I feel that I have not given the time I should to DH but I know that Jayne has gotten a lot of information from the staff. I realize it is not all my responsibility but I do think I played an important role. Being very busy is just the nature of this school. I would be more aware of the number of initiatives the staff was undertaking next time. When the whole staff is involved I need to help unload some things. (TI, Feb. 3)

What I did and what I did not do as a researcher influenced the implementation of DH. Some staff felt that the project was less effective than it could have been if everyone had been fully informed and had completely agreed with being involved in the research at the beginning of the study. While all of the staff understood that they could say they did not wish to be involved or opt out at any point, some felt that there was covert pressure to become involved. Celeste believed,
If we'd had more information about what we were supposed to do last spring, it might have made things easier. Although we were all so busy, it is hard to say. But I think it was an expectation that we get involved in DH. Mary didn't come out and say that but that is how I felt.... I would tell another researcher to give more detailed information in the spring. Give the staff more of an idea about what will happen. Maybe have an in-service in the spring. That would give us a chance to ask questions about how to do things. (TI, Jan. 27)

Ellen agreed with many of the points that Celeste made and also commented on the speed at which DH, Quality Schools and families were introduced. Ellen said,

It would have been good if Jayne had spent more time in the spring with the staff. They would have felt more informed and then could have said yes or no with more knowledge. I don't think we really understood. I think when we say yes sometimes our motives are not always pure. We say yes just to have someone come in and give us a hand. It might have been better to introduce DH more slowly -- give us more time to learn to reflect. I am not sure if we didn't jump into Quality Schools and families too quickly. I don't know if enough ground work was done. (TI, Jan. 30)

Given all of these conditions that affected DH, it is reasonable to believe that the project would have proven DH to be an unpopular and unproductive process. Quite the opposite finding was true. DH was extremely popular with the staff and was seen as a productive process that the staff wanted to keep. This is an interesting statement given all the reasons the process could have been derailed. The next chapter gives a picture of why the staff found DH valuable and decided to keep it as the decision making process for their staff after the formal portion of the research project was completed.

**What Did the Concept of DH Come to Mean to the Staff?**

In describing what DH ultimately meant to them, the staff used many metaphors. On one hand, they talked about DH giving them voice, promoting a team spirit, and leveling the playing field. On the other hand, they said that in using DH they were, at times, on shaky ground and were going in circles.
The positive aspects of DH far outweighed the negative for the staff. In fact, they discussed the importance of everyone “buying into” all three changes and pondered how they could go about ensuring that DH, Quality Schools and families would be continued next year. They also talked about dialogue and empowerment and discussed how DH might look in the future.

**Voice**

In describing the importance of having voice, the staff expressed a desire for all, students and staff, to be recognized and cared for in the school setting. They felt that DH was a nurturing process where care and concern for others were paramount. Monty suggested that DH gave voice to the students as illustrated by the “hat incident” but also gave voice to the staff. “Everyone in the school has the same say. The caretaker has as much voice as the principal. Their words carry equal weight” (TI, Jan. 31). Early in the study Summer expressed a belief that “this process will bring the staff together because every one has a voice” (FI, Sept. 9). Nan explained a concern she felt at the beginning of the study, “Change often comes from the top down. [While] teachers and students in the trenches are the ones affected by the the changes, students often come last. Do they have a voice? Maybe it is only through their parents and teachers [that they have a voice]” (FI, Sept. 4). Later her concern seemed to be alleviated when she stated, “It is good to be part of giving voice to people” (SI, Nov. 12).

Others were impressed that they actually had voice at Inkonze. Lynne remarked, “I can’t get used to having a voice; a voice that is listened to. In another school I did not dare speak. What I think actually counts here” (SI, Nov. 5). Kirsten noted the sense of power DH instilled in her. She stated,

> It is a nice option to be able to stop something if I didn’t believe in it. When Monty was talking about [wanting to allow] the kids [to use] the staff washrooms I felt better knowing that I could say no and be heard. Knowing that saying “I can’t live with this” was
there gave me voice and a sense of power. (TI, Feb. 3)

Giving voice to the less vocal was important to Terri. She described the impact of DH as positive in many ways. “People who were less vocal before now have voice. They are now able to contribute. This process has tied nicely to Quality Schools. It has empowered even less vocal people” (SI, Nov. 4). Madeline liked the new process. She went so far as to say, “I don’t dread staff meetings. I almost look forward to them. Here it is positive and everyone has more voice” (SI, Nov. 4).

**Team**

The concept of working as a team was a important one for the staff at Inkonze. Many staff members talked about having been a team the year before and expressed a strong desire to develop a team spirit for the current school year. During a staff meeting, Monty had used the analogy of being like a dog team when he was expressing the need for them to all work together. Terri picked up on this analogy and used it to describe her perceptions of the current change initiatives.

Monty used the analogy of dogs pulling in different directions. With Quality School and DH everyone is equal. So it changes the top down and we all pull together. But it is hard to change because we have had top down for so many years. It is a good step. (TI, Feb. 5).

Brown explained the reason for working as a team. She felt that it would have been beneficial for “the staff to have built trust and confidence in the beginning. Get to know each other. Then when we had stumbles we would be more secure and comfortable with each other. The way it was we were insecure and that caused some misunderstanding because the communication was not there. It would be best to build a strong team first” (TI, Feb. 6).
Level Playing Field or Shaky Ground?

The reality of having voice and developing a team mentality appeared to level the playing field as described by several staff members. Kirsten said, DH has made a difference with the staff. There are always some natural leaders who dominate but with DH everyone has a chance. I have seen a big difference with the way the staff dialogues. It has leveled the playing field. Everyone has the same amount of power which in part is due to Quality School but a large part is due to DH. (SI, Nov. 12)

Madeline felt that reflective time was important “because not everyone can respond quickly so it helps put everyone on an equal basis” (SI, Nov. 4).

The importance of leveling the playing field so that everyone was equal seemed to be an important quest for the staff. But achieving that equality was at times very difficult. To get to level ground we had to go through some periods when the ground was shaky. In commenting on the fun factor, Summer explained why she believed that Inkonze began the year on shaky ground. She recounted, “I do not believe that the lack of fun was due to DH. I believe it had to do with the staff change and the fact that last year ended up on shaky ground. Trust had to develop for some people to feel safe” (SI, Nov. 14).

One young member of the staff felt his position in the school kept him from engaging in dialogue. Kalther felt, as an intern, that he was not on an equal footing. He felt that he still had to “jump through the hoops.” “When I want to voice disagreement or a perspective, I need to be aware of the repercussions or consequences. Therefore, no dialogue can occur between me and other staff members” (JR, Oct. 24).

Even though there were a few instances in which staff felt the uneasy or unequal sharing of power, the majority felt that DH assisted in the development of the atmosphere necessary for community.
Circles

At times the staff experienced a feeling of lack of progress and commented about going in circles. Sarah expressed a need for having a lot of time to make a decision if DH were used.

[When we have] time I like the idea of DH. I find in meetings we talk in circles. I want to get it over with and make a decision. With DH sometimes it takes too long. Sometimes we need an answer and we don’t have all day. Sometimes we need to decide about a student and need to know what is going to happen tomorrow. (TI, Jan. 28)

Lynne talked about going in circles when DH is used and also when it is not used. She recalled having heard “some grumbling at the retreat about the process not getting anywhere. A couple of people said that they weren’t thrilled and were having difficulty reflecting”. As well, she expressed frustration because “we don’t use it [DH] to make decisions in the family group. I find we often go in circles” (SI, Nov. 5).

Buying In

Early in the study Monty was concerned about whether or not the staff would “buy into” the process. He said, “It’s important to get everyone to buy into the decision. It will be worthwhile in the end. It will be easier as we go along and get used to the process” (FI, Sept. 4). Later in the study Rosebud saw some progress but was still concerned with the buy-in. She commented, “I feel we are doing well. We are moving in the right direction. Everybody has to buy-in or it doesn’t work” (SI, Nov. 4). Even when we were nearing the end of the study, Sarah continued to raise concerns about the buy-in. She gave a historical perspective;

Mary made the decision to have Quality School and families because she felt it was important enough. I thought the people who stayed on [at Inkonze] were behind it. Mary was the impetus. Some people may not have bought in. Everyone needs to see the good points. Some of them have just continued doing what they were doing before in their class. That makes it difficult if you are
on their team. (TI, Jan. 28)

Kim, in reflecting about the study, remarked, “The most troublesome part was some not completely buying in. The start was slow” (TI, Jan. 29). It seemed that everyone wanted to be united in their commitment to DH, Quality Schools, and families but some were struggling.

The Tradition

Monty eloquently expressed what the staff was feeling when the possibility of Mary leaving the school became known. He said,

The challenge for all of us is to convince the new principal the need to carry on [with] DH. The first few times are slow and frustrating and the new principal may want to be expedient. The principal has so much influence. My role will be to spend time and explain the need for DH to support Quality Schools and families. If we can survive in the fall, then there will be a tradition, an induction process. All the staff will need to be part of the induction process. We can't take our roles lightly. We need to talk in the spring about how to keep our direction. The vice-principal is supposed to be the carrier of the culture when there is a new principal. The new principal will have his/her own ideas but if we all want the same thing it will be harder to ignore. I will say some things in private but the staff needs [to make] plans to share their values. (TI, Jan. 31)

Rosebud echoed his thoughts,

I hope [DH] continues. I wonder how it will be as we have changes in staff; new administration, staff back from leave, and all. Once there is some stability it will go a lot smoother. Trying this for one or two terms doesn't work. I would like to see Mary (if she is transferred) meet with a new principal and talk about DH so we could continue it next year. It is not fair otherwise. It takes a long time. We have many new people this year so maybe most will stay next year so we will have some stability. (TI, Jan. 28).

Although Madeline is not a permanent staff member, she expressed a desire to see DH continue as well. “Hopefully, a new principal will see how well everything is working and won't want to go back to the old way” (TI, Jan. 30).

In discussing her feelings on whether or not to continue using DH after the research was completed, Kim stated,
I would use DH with important issues. It feels good to say "I can live with that." That is freeing and no nonsense. I have noticed that nobody has bitched and complained after these meetings. I have noticed on other staff that there is a lot of that. This process stifles this nonsense. There is no top down in this process. It involves everyone. There are no positions of power. If we kept this process going strong until June we could show a new leader how strongly we feel. They would be less likely to resist. Monty will have to be the one to carry DH with new principal. (TI, Jan. 29)

In fact, when the staff explained why they wished to see DH continue, the diversity of the staff members' viewpoints became apparent. While the reasons to keep DH were varied, the staff was united in their decision to maintain the process for the rest of this year and next year as well. Madeline said, "Everyone needs power and control. I believe that people's need for love and belonging are being met in DH. Encouraging everyone to speak fosters an attitude of belonging and enables them to have power and control" (RJ. Sept. 23).

**Insights and Solutions**

Reflective groups were seen as vital because they gave the staff a way to deal with complex or controversial matters. The third reflective group, in fact, dealt with defining the job of the reflective group and the fifth reflective group gave suggestions on how to continue using these groups after I completed the study. The question raised in the third group was should the reflective group be a decision making body or is it a brainstorming, suggestion giving body? The group produced three suggestions:

1. The group believes that the reflection group is a brainstorming, suggestion group but encourages trying the ideas that the group brings to the staff before other suggestions are presented in the hopes of limiting unnecessary discussion and therefore saving time.  
2. Give the background for each suggestion summarizing the discussion so that the reasons for the suggestions are presented thereby eliminating many concerns.  
3. Staff should still be given an opportunity to say they can or can not live with the suggestions. (MRG, Nov. 25)
Madeline described why the reflective group was meaningful for her, “I like the reflective meetings and being part of a small group. It was good to be part of gaining insights and helping come up with effective solutions” (TI, Jan. 30). Shirla described her work in a reflective group as empowering (JR, Oct. 31). Gina summarized what others expressed, “I liked the reflective meetings. Good things came out of those” (TI, Jan. 27).

**Tone Down and Sit Back**

Dialogue rather than discuss became a watchword for all of us. While I highlighted dialogue as an important part of DH I did not realize what a foundational concept it was. We spent some time at the community retreat studying the difference between dialogue and discussion. Before the retreat, I had placed some information about dialogue and what it means on the staffroom table for the staff to read at their leisure. At the retreat I was impressed with the number of staff who had read the information and the subsequent questions staff members raised about dialogue and how it fit with DH and Quality Schools. After the meeting I wrote:

> I am quite excited about the questions and comments on the presentation about dialogue. People seem to be very open and honest with their feelings. Non-school based staff attended this meeting and they entered the discussion as well. One person mentioned that there are times when she can’t let go of her stand. That is who she is and she values it very much. It would be changing who she is and she can’t do that. Others commented that it is a power thing and people will live and die with the issue of power and control. (FNR, Oct. 24)

The staff repeatedly commented on the value of learning to talk “with” not “at.” They felt that this was one of the critical elements of DH.

As a result of our study on dialogue, Madeline wrote, “I worked in my class on listening to each other. We all need to listen better; teacher-to-student and student-to-student. It is the same as dialogue and discussion. It’s about having equal power” (SI, Nov. 14). Kirsten believed that “DH has made
a difference with the staff. There are always some natural leaders who dominate but with DH everyone has a chance. I have seen a big difference with the way the staff dialogues” (SI, Nov. 12). As well, Lou showed a consistent appreciation for dialogue. Early in her journal reflections she said that she agreed with the philosophy of dialogue and believed that tolerance for others’ ideas is very important (JR, Oct. 24). A week later, after reflecting, she recalled,

I liked the meeting last week. I appreciate others’ views. Bohm’s ideas are like mine. I am intrigued by differences. I feel strongly but appreciate the opinions of others. I don’t have tunnel vision. My philosophy is not to get upset with others. Dialogue is an effective way to come up with plans versus discussion. (SI, Nov. 1)

Nan, in describing the way DH enhanced dialogue, reflected on the growth she was experiencing. She noted,

DH is my preferred way to communicate. We are more aware of the needs of others and more aware of the less vocal ones. Sometimes we don’t notice the people who don’t contribute. Now I realize that they didn’t feel invited. The vocal people tend to monopolize conversation. Discussion encourages domination; dialogue encourages participation. I am learning to tone down and sit back and reflect. But I still don’t do enough of that. (TI, Jan. 25)

Kim highlighted the importance of listening in the process of dialogue. She wrote that listening is as important as speaking and is interactive in nature (JR, Oct. 19). Learning to dialogue was an on-going process because in essence we were all doing some “unlearning” as well as learning. Dialogue was often linked by the consociates to empowerment.

**The Power of Empowerment**

Some of the connections the staff made between empowerment and dialogue were implicit and others were explicit. Shirla in two consecutive journal writings explained how she saw these concepts intertwined and expressed how important being empowered was to her. She wrote:
I felt empowered after the meeting. I feel my personal understanding of DH and communicative dialogue are beginning to expand. Growth after the labour pains.... I felt empowered by the staff being able to state their weaknesses in a PD activity. It is easy to hold one's position and become isolated. I know being a collaborative school is important.... I am feeling that I am making good growth.... I feel empowered being part of the 2nd reflective group. DH's understanding is growing. We are all improving in its usage. The labour pains are passing and the new creation is imminent. I am glad I am part of this research. I like the way we all give and receive ideas, reflect, and piggy-back off the ideas of others. It has become a safe environment to speak our real feelings and opinions.... Growth takes time but I see the end-product can be achieved quicker in terms of time. It is done with a greater depth of understanding and a more collaborative and beneficial manner. (JR, Oct. 23 & 31)

Red described the significance of empowerment for him: "I feel the staff seems to want to continue DH because it represents staff empowerment. When DH lends itself to the community it represents community empowerment" (JR, Jan. 16).

During his first interview Monty, in explaining why he wanted to teach DH to the students, emphasized the importance of empowerment. He remarked,

Students have the need for power. They need a chance to show their maturity and have power. Maybe we could teach DH to students if my partners [team of three upper years teachers] agree. The process is non-threatening. The level of trust will go up as they know decisions won't be vetoed. There is a strong link between DH and empowerment. (FI, Sept. 4)

Nan saw a connection between her own empowerment and the empowerment of her students. She stated,

What is good for me is good for the students. Respect, responsibility, and ownership empowers me in the same way that those values empower our students. If I am empowered, they will be empowered. They will develop awareness of self and take ownership for their own learning. (TI, Jan. 27)

Lynne communicated her belief in the value of empowerment for staff when she described her view of DH and the "hat issue". She recounted,

I feel the research has been a big support. It gets people to look at
others and value them rather than just being concerned with the facts. I feel that it is empowering staff. The hat issue with the kids [is an example]. I like being able to revisit an issue and being able to say “I don’t agree but can live with it.” It is an important part of a quality picture and is important for teachers to be able to speak their minds. DH gives a sense of belonging because others can understand why you feel as you do. It is better than majority rule. (SI, Nov. 5)

Red reiterated the belief that voting is not beneficial or empowering. He said, “Making decisions everyone can live with works because it empowers and supports everyone when we can veto the decision if we need to. Consensus is the best part of decision making” (TI, Jan 27).

Monty, whom I believed to be a wise visionary, expressed strongly his conviction that empowering people is something we should all be “about.” He explained,

Nobody wants to go back to where we were. We can live with the scrapes and bruises. At times it has been painful. I remember feeling upset by the meeting in December, but the meeting in January went very well. We have moved from “all my fault” to “all our fault” when things go wrong. Now it is going to be more difficult to ignore someone because they won’t put up with it. I don’t think anyone will quietly accept their fate. When you have been empowered, you have new rights and freedoms. You will exercise those rights and freedoms. This may be similar to the blacks and natives when they have experienced power; then they are not willing to go back. (TI, Jan. 31)

Indeed, going back to the previous way was not a wish I heard anyone expressing.

**The Future**

Monty also believed DH to be an important part of the way we communicate. In his final interview he presented his wish for the future,

I want to stay with no voting, that way people will feel secure enough to disagree and we can celebrate our differences. It is important for people to be able to say “I disagree but I can live with it.” It is valuable to verbalize your feelings rather than simply voting. It will take years for this kind of process to spread. As the staff leaves here they can take their ideas with them but it
will be difficult if they are alone in the next school. But I can see a long term acceptance of not voting. We can make some right choices. People complain about revisiting a decision. We often do revisit when we vote because some people can't live with the decision. (TI, Jan. 31)

Others described their desires for the future in varying ways: “DH is the way to operate - doing the right things. I don't think we should vote” (Mary, TI, Feb. 3); “I would choose DH for the group.... There are many strong personalities that would like control but in this there is freedom for all” (Rosebud, TI, Jan. 28); “I will take this process with me to other groups. I have noticed when we only vote yes or no people don't feel like they are listened to” (Lynne, TI, Feb. 3); “In summary DH is the best decision making process. I agree with it in my heart. I am trying it at home and in my classroom” (Terri, TI, Feb. 6); “DH has helped us to communicate better by speaking out and listening to each other. We can evolve with this process to become more effective members of the school community. We are all in a learning process. All of us want to improve our communication and leadership skills for the benefit of our school” (Red, TI, Jan. 27). The staff was united in wanting to use DH because it promoted communication that was people centered.

**Effective DHers**

The synergy that DH produced was significant. We experienced synergy in action but each of us noticed this phenomenon at different times. I reported a particular poignant moment for me in November. Suddenly I realized how important everyone's thoughts, reactions, and suggestions were and I expressed these thoughts in a letter to the staff. I wrote:

I think we have all witnessed “synergy” in action. The PD part of the staff meeting was the result of input through your reflective journals. The way we approached the “doing well” and “not” was the result of the dialogue/discussion presentation that spurred one person to write about the important/not important idea, another to
express a desire to examine our assumptions about staff meetings, and many to indicate a need to spend time together. The PD [activity] would have been very different without the input of the whole group. We arrived at a better place than the destination planned by one or two. (SL, Nov. 12)

In October a teacher wrote this vignette, “I am heartened by what has happened today. I feel a sense of synergy -- all things are working together toward one purpose. The decision to become a quality school has changed my life” (JR, Oct. 24). Many staff members remarked on the difference working together made even if they did not realize that they were experiencing synergy. An example of this phenomena was reflected in Dana’s comments, “Setting goals together was a good idea. It was nice to have a common aim to work on together” (SI, Nov. 14).

While we were having some very positive experiences, the learning process was difficult but most felt the pain was worthwhile. Red described the insights he was gaining when he wrote:

I am perceiving that DH is the initial step for building a healthy, strong community. We need to learn to express our feelings and listen to one another. Being effective DHers is not about comfort. It’s about confrontation and undergoing the necessary discomfort to grow together. I am intrigued by the Peck article on community building. I feel the staff must strengthen their community, put forth enthusiastic effort, become visionary, and undergo discomfort. Anything else would be irresponsible. I am excited about community building. I feel I have little to lose -- status or power. I choose to remain optimistic about the future of DH, the school and the community. (JR, Jan. 12)

What Skills Did the Staff Develop as a Result of Using DH?

The staff commented on the skills they developed and at the same time described their insights, reactions, and commitment to DH. In explaining the importance of the skills they were acquiring, they described the significance of getting to a better understanding of others and themselves.
Other People's Skin

Gaining insight into the feelings and thoughts of others was seen as a positive outcome of the research. In describing their own learning, many consociates reported a new, fresh appreciation for others on staff. Only one staff member felt she had not gained insights or learned anything new but even she reported coming to a personal realization. In a candid journal entry, Nan discussed her personal journey. She noted,

I have been thinking of the way I have felt about vocal/ nonvocal personalities. I want to learn to take the perspective of the other. I am a passionate person. But I am going to try to temper my enthusiasm by putting myself in the "other person's skin". I am hoping I will learn to be more tolerant. I know that no matter how excited I am about a project I need the cooperation of others. (JR, Jan. 18)

Others knowingly or unknowingly attempted to put themselves in the skins' of others as well. Some stated it as simply as Red when he said, "I learned that everyone has their hang ups" (TI, Jan 27). Or Brown when she explained, "My listening skills improved and I didn't have blinders on. I was not so quick to judge and react to people's different ideas; listening and hearing how they feel is important. I really didn't listen before." (TI, Feb. 6). Others' accounts were more complex. Lynne critiqued herself by saying,

I look forward to continuing to grow. I know my listening skills are weak. I want to grow to the place where I can feel secure and not threatened by strong personalities. I need to learn to express my ideas/suggestions and truly listen and attempt to understand others' perspectives. (JR, Oct. 24)

Celeste explained her growth in the context of the school. She said, "I learned that I tend to make decisions too quickly. Now I think about others' reactions. This research has given staff a chance to view other staff members" (TI, Jan. 27). Dana, who was throughout the research the most cautious and at times critical staff member, said:

I learned a lot about people having a negative side and a positive side. I realized it wasn't just an issue about what I believed but I
learned to accept all ideas.... I learned a lot about staff communication. Everyone has their own manner; it doesn’t need to be one way. We need to have parts of lots of things to get a whole. Then everyone is comfortable. (TI, Jan. 29).

Monty felt that he had become a better administrator. He related,

In my experience as a member of the vice-principals’ executive we were willing to ignore 20% of the members. We were willing for them to be unhappy. Our first reaction was that they are a small minority. Now we try to find something we can all live with. I don’t want to exclude anyone. It must be terrible when you are completely alone. (TI, Jan. 31)

Often the staff reported new skills, insights, and growths that were very personal. Celeste described an experience with her family:

I used components of DH during a family death in a discussion about funeral arrangements. My brother, sister, and I have had difficulty discussing issues. So I used the “I don’t like it but can live with it” quite often. It helped me in making decisions and relating to my family. I realized that it changed my way of communicating and helped in making the decisions go much more smoothly. (JR, Jan. 14)

During the last interview Mary (TI, Feb. 6) commented that she had become more introspective during this project and that this introspection had led her to feel that she was reacting defensively at times. In the early days of the research Summer stated, “We need to respect each other and pausing gives you time to think and process without reacting. It is a skill we need to learn. I want to work on this” (FI, Sept. 9). Sarah provided snippets of her journey during this research in each of her interviews. She remarked, “I tend to be willing to try new ideas and see the best. I have difficulty working with people who won’t try something new. I am not afraid to talk about my weaknesses” (FI, Sept. 5). Then she noted, “The biggest thing about the decision making process is that it makes me more aware of not restating my ideas” (SI, Nov. 1). Towards the end of the study she stated, “I am more aware of what I am doing in other groups. It has been good for me. Personally, I try to listen more in meetings and not restate ideas” (TI, Jan. 28).
Nan, who was brutally honest in her self assessment, explained her personal growth.

I tend to jump in. I need to learn to take a step back. I need to use my passion to the best advantage in teaching. I need to shut up, listen, and look at myself. What are my motives? I am starting to take the perspective of others. I need to be kind to myself and others. We are all here for the kids. They are our common ground. We need to share our basic assumptions about what we want to do for kids. I like piggybacking on ideas; seeing what is best. We are working on cooperation and building on each others’ strength. I need to remember that some staff need to be invited to do that. (TI, Jan. 27)

Terri’s journal reflections provided a picture of her insights. She wrote:

I am trying to take time to think about what others are saying, but also what I think. I am taking considerably more time to think about what I would like to say. I have noticed that in our society the more you say the more power you have. I don’t mean that in a positive way. But if you say something once it can be more powerful than repeating. If people are not listening they can miss what you say because they are just waiting to make their point. Sometimes I feel so strongly about what I believe that I forget to really listen. (RJ, Oct. 11)

Others were more reserved in their comments. Lou stated her learning simply: “It [DH] has made us aware of listening, thinking, and reflecting. That is what I have learned and appreciated the most. I learned that I need to take time to reflect and not jump in” (TI, Feb. 3). These sentiments were echoed by others as well. Ellen reported gaining a self affirming perception as well as a philosophical insight. She reported,

My involvement in the project produced growth in my thinking. Perhaps the thing that is most important is how complicated the process of democratic discussion is. I learned that I do have good ideas. I think things through, maybe because of my age. (TI, Jan. 30)

Madeline made a paradoxical statement about her growth; “I have learned to be more critical in a positive way” (TI, Jan. 30). The growth that took place for all of the consociates was noteworthy. While my growth and insights will be reported later, I did grow and change in ways I never foresaw at the
beginning of the study. This project has been more than a simple research endeavour for us all.

**Was DH a Beneficial Process for a Restructuring Endeavour?**

Whether or not DH is an important process for implementing all change endeavours is an issue to be discussed in the next chapter. The point I examine here is, was DH important to Inkonze School staff in implementing Quality Schools and families? The staff explained the way that they saw DH supporting and facilitating the concepts and beliefs fundamental to Quality Schools and the way it ameliorated the everyday discussions and problem solving that naturally followed the formation of family groupings in the place of grade levels.

**The Fit**

The staff reported seeing a fit between Quality Schools and DH. They felt that both concepts encouraged the development of what is called a quality world by Glasser (1990) and community by Peck (1993). Glasser's (1994) description of trust revealed it to be a foundational element in his Control Theory as it was in DH. He stated,

> Trust means that the workers, based on experience, have come to believe that a manager has their best interest in mind. To establish this trust, the manager must learn to...give up traditional boss prerogatives of criticizing and coercing the workers. I define trust as the belief that the person you trust not only will not hurt you but, at times, has your welfare in mind. Quality is achieved through harmony and respect; there is no other way (p. 33). Quality is built on cooperation and for cooperation to exist there must be trust. (pp. 10-11, 19, 33, 99)

From her administrative standpoint Mary talked about the way she saw the processes fitting and some reasons why both were important in the school and important to her. She said,

> The process is good. There are school issues which need to be
discussed. I was really excited about DH and the way it fit in with Control Theory. CT and DH both helped me realize the need to reflect. So many good things have happened this year. I realized that I need to know someone for awhile before I really know them. One teacher was seen as a star last year but she is having difficulty being collegial. I wouldn’t have seen that without CT and DH. (TI, Feb. 3)

Staff members felt that DH had made for an easier and more effective implementation of Quality School and families. Monty felt he would need to explain to the new principal in the coming year “the need for DH to support Quality Schools and families” (TI, Jan. 31). Rosebud noted how much DH was influencing what was happening in a Control Theory meeting and felt that “everyone was reflecting before speaking”. She felt that “it was wonderful” (JR, Sept. 26). Nan discussed the importance of many of the elements that are fundamental to DH. She noted,

DH fits in very well with Quality School concept. It works well with the philosophy requiring the involvement of the staff, students, and parents. It is empowering. An important part of Quality School is empowerment and taking ownership. We take ownership for all parts of the process. The important part of the project for me was seeing how consensual decision making empowers. It is important to get everyone on board. But there is still a problem of choice. Philosophy of consensual decision making fits well with Quality School. (TI, Jan. 27)

Lynne explained her feelings about DH and reported a discussion that she and Terri had about DH and Quality School. Lynne recalled, “I hope we stick with DH. I like having a different decision making process that is fair and promotes understanding. Terri and I were discussing the fact that it goes with Control Theory. Everyone is aware of what they want and the good of the group” (TI, Feb. 3). Terri said,

With Quality School and DH everyone is equal.... At home I am using DH, without saying so, with my husband. Before I knew it, he was speaking the language of “I can live with it or I can’t.” It was slower at home and more natural to implement. It is like Control Theory where love and trust come first. (TI, Feb. 5)
Brown reflected on the importance of Quality School and DH for a community school. She stated,

Quality Schools is wonderful for a community school. Quality School and DH build and strengthen people. The whole school has changed. With families we are working for closeness and new and better things for kids. The in-services strengthen us as people and help us focus on the kids. We are all equally important. It is good now that we have all come together. (TI, Feb. 6)

After attending the Control Theory/Quality School weekend in-service Madeline wrote about her insights: "Everyone needs power and control. I believe that people's need for love and belonging are being met in DH. Encouraging everyone to speak fosters an attitude of belonging and enables them to have power and control" (JR, Sept. 23). Not only has DH complemented and integrated many of the same attributes as Quality School, it has made solution finding and solution implementation a more satisfying process for the staff on various school-based issues.

**Ahas**

One of the most exciting aspects of this research was finding together the "ahas" that Schensul and Schensul (1992) talk about; "Collaborative problem solving incorporates creative and critical thinking skills and generates the 'aha' that motivates the problem-solver to move in new directions" (p. 195). Together, the staff and I traveled many avenues that I never envisaged when this project began. For example, finding a way to promote reflection time in meetings and to encourage everyone to speak was a difficult task, but an enlightening experience. Waiting for insights was time consuming but when a solution was found, the pleasure and increased commitment that we all felt were truly synergistic. The fact that two experienced teachers indicated, after the November staff meeting, that they were looking forward to the next meeting was significant in itself. But even more noteworthy was the realization that the level of trust was extremely
influential to the on-going process. Trust was the focus of many discussions and was often highlighted by the staff.

**It Feels Awful**

While I had recognized trust as an implicit element of DH (see Figure 4), I had not foreseen how instrumental trust would be for the staff as we struggled with learning a new way to make decisions and, as a result, a new way to relate. The staff's need to be in a trusting relationship individually and collectively was stated both positively and negatively. The indispensability of trust was reflected in the words of some consociates when they felt trust was lacking. Sharon wrote in frustration after a particularly contentious meeting,

> I felt the staff meeting yesterday was uncomfortable. I felt that there were under currents of anger. Some items put on the white board were changed because one person felt threatened. The item should not be changed because of one person. This is the worst staff meeting for trust not being there. I felt some people were put in their place during the staff meeting. We have not had that happen this year. I feel more than ever your DH is based on trust. When it is not there, it feels awful. (RJ, Dec. 5)

After this same meeting Kalther's remarked, "When I presented the ideas about the newsletter the body language of the staff in a superior position left me feeling like I had nothing to contribute. The feeling of power was transmitted effectively. I am feeling squashed" (RJ, Dec. 5). Yet another reaction to this meeting was reported by Nan who had come from another school environment that was intimidating. She noted,

> How can we talk about consensual decision making and then propose formation of a committee to explore an issue that hasn't even been discussed or input invited? I feel uncomfortable bringing this issue up. It is the same old problem of being pragmatic, realistic and keeping my mouth shut -- playing it safe versus strive for an ideal and taking risks -- setting myself up as a target. Now I have to ask myself if I really trust enough to be candid -- or will there be negative consequences -- grudges held against me. (JR, Dec. 5)

She did talk to the other staff member and found him to be very trustworthy.
She reported, “I was glad I talked to him about the problem. I trusted him enough to do that. I think it is a professional obligation” (FI, Jan. 27).

After that staff meeting in December, the feelings for most of us were so negative that I provided lunch for the staff so that we could have a threshing session (a dialogue in which no decisions would be made) about the issues that the staff felt needed to be discussed. But even at this low point one staff member could see some positive aspects of the meeting and helped us refocus and continue our growth process. Rosebud, who was a very up-beat person, wrote in her journal, “Great meeting! We’re becoming like a family. Not afraid to disagree” (JR Dec. 5).

At another time two staff members were having trouble relating. One person felt her trust had been violated. While the two individuals involved dealt with their problem and appeared to mend the rift, their broken relationship affected other staff members and as a result had a negative effect on the research project's progress for several weeks. Mary wrote:

I am worried about an incident of one staff member talking about another staff member. I felt it was handled professionally. But as a consequence the teacher talked about feels uncomfortable speaking in the group. I reassured her to have confidence to speak openly. Another staff member told me that she is aware of the situation and feels that it is affecting staff morale. (JR, Nov. 11)

The repercussions of this incident may have been more far reaching than was apparent to either the principal or to me. But due to the professional attitude of this staff, they dealt with their feelings without sabotaging the group process.

**A Big Deal**

The positive aspects of trust were highlighted by many people. I was constantly impressed by the staff's commitment to building trusting teacher/teacher, teacher/student, and student/student relationships. Sarah relayed how important trust was to her and to her students. She commented
on how trustworthy Mary and Monty were (SI, Nov. 1). She also related that "trust and power are a big deal for teachers. It is surprising that when you give up power to students, your relationship improves. They are trustworthy and ethical" (FI, Sept. 5). Gina highlighted the connection between Control Theory and trust. She remarked, "I had a wonderful experience at the Control Theory weekend. I feel more in touch with my needs. I noticed the trust and honesty exhibited by the staff. It helped me with understanding others and their basic needs" (RJ, Sept, 24).

Several staff noted that DH built trust and respect and they commented on how essential these aspects were for them (Terri, SI, Nov. 4; Kirsten, SI, Nov. 12; Ellen, SI, Nov. 13). Shirla's vignette was particularly insightful. She revealed,

I see a lot of changes since the first staff meeting. The growth in the staff I contribute [attribute] to DH. All the elements of collaboration are in DH. We have worked on skills one step at the time. We have worked on things like what sharing power means and learning to respect each other. I believe that we must work with a positive attitude and belief. The cycle of learning is a belief in your values and putting in effort. People are able to speak their ideas more confidently and feel it is becoming safer to do so that, in fact, their idea is a gift. (SI, Nov. 14).

Trust was fundamental in the staff/administrator relationship. In reporting about their relationship with the administrators, staff often discussed the level of trust that had been established.

**Theory X, Theory Y**

Leadership style was paramount in the minds of all the staff including the administrators themselves. Monty believed, "Trust and positive assumptions are important parts of leadership. Theory X & Y are still relevant. It is important to empower others and team build. Mary is very open and trusting. She is honest with feedback and is empowering" (SI, Nov. 13). Kim noted, "Mary has an empowering leadership style. She treats me as
a professional. If I have a problem she will help me solve it. She does what needs to be done. She respects individual differences and style” (SI, Nov. 13). Nan felt that a trusting relationship with the administrators was vitally important. In the second interview she revealed,

I can trust Monty and Mary. I perceive that Mary is working on building trust with me. I have learned in the past to be distrustful, but only in one specific situation. I am not generally distrustful. You don't collaborate on a deep level with those you distrust. (SI, Nov. 12)

Lou remarked, “Mary is good for the staff. She is not a power person. Mary’s leadership style is not power and control. She lets you teach and trusts you” (FI, Sept. 9). The leadership style that was evident in this school was a mirror image of the style that writers such as Tichy and Devanna (1986) and Bennis (1989) say is needed for change endeavours to be successful.

The trust that the administrators extended to the staff was reciprocated. As was reflected by Celeste’s comments when she conveyed the way she saw Monty and Mary’s style and their effect on the staff: The trust and faith goes both ways; they trust and have faith in the staff and the staff in them. (SI, Nov. 19). As was quoted earlier, Lynne noted, “The leadership in this school is 100% trustworthy and ethical” (SI, Nov. 5).

That trust was vitally important to all the staff is apparent. Whether or not DH could have been implemented without that basic trust having been established early in the study, based to a large degree on the model of trust set by the administrators, is an intriguing question.

Summary

Reflecting on the adventures the consociates and I experienced, I am reminded of what Wolcott (1994) said: “there’s always a ‘dark and stormy night’ somewhere” (p. 56). While we had our share of dark and stormy nights, we also had our share of clear, sunny weather. The staff believed that DH
encouraged the development of a high level of trust and became an effective process for implementing change at Inkone. It was a process that not only promoted an effective way to make decisions but it also offered the staff a forum that encouraged learning a new way of communicating and nurtured an appreciation for the importance of collaboration, collegiality, empowerment, and cooperation. Through this study the staff began to understand and value dissenting voices, using win/win strategies, and coming to collective agreement (a sense of the meeting). Leadership became a joint venture in which everyone shared ownership of and responsibility for the decisions made and the directions chosen.

These conclusion are the ones that surfaced for me as a result of my contemplation of the data. Hopefully, this chapter has provided the reader with "sufficient information to be able to arrive independently at the same conclusions as the researcher or to arrive at alternative and equally plausible explanations" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 58).

The next chapter presents a summary of the findings of this study and includes more about my understandings, reflections, and growth. As well, during the course of this study many questions have surfaced for me. These questions will be examined and implications for further research will be introduced.
CHAPTER SIX
REFLECTIONS ON THE STUDY

In writing this chapter I was reminded of the question that Wolcott (1994) believes is "faced by everyone who conducts research in the qualitative/descriptive or, for that matter, any other mode: 'So what?'" (p. 256). In answering this question, I think it is obligatory that the purpose of this study be examined by addressing what I (we) tried to do and what I (we) did.

The purpose of this study was to ascertain the use of dynamic harmonization in the implementation of a change initiative in a school setting. The description of the adventure experienced by the Inkonze staff in Chapter Five gave an account of what happened and how the staff felt about the process. The narrative provided an account of the way the staff came to value DH (dynamic harmonization) and their use of the elements of DH that were depicted in Figures 1-4. We began with the basic understanding of DH and modified it to fit the staff's needs. Through the various activities the role of leadership was redefined, relationships were reshaped, and the way the consociates thought about decision making was transformed. DH was used by the staff to instill change in a manner that was felt to be beneficial to the staff and students.

This chapter will focus on my thoughts and feelings about the study and what I believe we did and did not discover. I have attempted to expose my assumptions and biases so that the reader can ascertain whether my answer to "so what" is their answer.

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So What?

The aim of action research, in particular participatory action research, has been promoted as emancipatory by numerous authors (Zuber-Skerritt, 1996; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Reason, 1994a). Initially this study appeared to be an emancipatory one in that it would help the staff learn to use a new and freeing way to dialogue, make decisions, solve problems, and implement change; however, as the study progressed I began to question whether or not all the staff would agree that it had freed them. For the staff who said that they now had voice it seems likely that they felt emancipated by this approach, but the ones who talked about toning down and learning to listen might say they were more confined than freed. In reflecting on this paradox, I discovered McTaggart’s (1996) statement that we assume “that ‘emancipation’ is some ideal state to be achieved”... but “it is not the aspiration of participatory action research, which works on critique of current conditions and more or less immediate attempts at concrete improvement. Its referent is ‘Are things better than they were?’ not ‘Are we emancipated yet?’ ” (p. 245).

In reflecting on this study and what we learned, I agree with McTaggart (1996) that “action researchers must simply ask regularly whether things are a little more rational (or reasonable), coherent, just, humane and satisfying for participants and others than they were” (p. 245). The words of the consociates in our study suggest a strong “yes” answer to this question. DH has made their life better, personally and professionally. Things are better, more reasonable, coherent, just, humane, and satisfying.

Are Things Better Than They Were?

In Chapter Three a list of indicators for ascertaining the usefulness of DH at Inkonze School were delineated. These indicators were: (1) the feelings
and examples of increased empowerment; (2) the attainment of the change goal that was set by the staff; (3) the degree of collegiality and collaboration experienced; (4) the level of trust among the staff; (5) the opportunities provided for dissenting points of view and the reaction to these views; (6) the use of language which is inclusive and invitational; (7) the amount of carry over into other problem solving situations; and (8) the degree of community achieved. Each of these indicators was addressed implicitly in Chapter Five. Here explicit answers will be presented with examples from the statements made by the consociates.

Empowerment was addressed specifically in Chapter Five. The staff talked about feelings of empowerment that they had experienced. The administrators discussed the importance of empowering the staff and the staff felt that being empowered meant that they would be able to empower students. DH was seen as an empowering process. Monty described the connection between DH and empowerment when he talked about everyone having an equal say and there were no losers (TI, Jan. 31). Nan noted that this decision making process was empowering for her and that learning DH was empowering for the students (TI, Jan. 27).

The staff continued to work on the goals of becoming a Quality School and honing the family groupings. As presented in Chapter Five, the staff has decided to continue using DH because it has helped them in implementing these changes thus far. The close fit between the assumptions in Control Theory and Quality School and DH was unexpected but an added dimension of the study.

Collegiality and collaboration were an integral part of the study. The times when communication broke down or when a staff member was less than collegial were the points at which we experienced difficulty. The staff often discussed being able to count on each other. Ellen remarked, “I work
alone in many ways, but I do not feel isolated. I have the support I need” (SL, Nov. 13). Nan noted that the reflective group was an excellent opportunity for collaboration and that she felt she was learning a great deal from others (JR, Feb. 6).

As discussed in Chapter Five, trust was explicitly noted as a vital element of the study. Staff often remarked on the need for and appreciation of trusting relationships. They highlighted the way in which DH promoted the development of trust and remarked on how awful it felt when trust was missing. As Shirla wrote in her journal, the staff was feeling freer and safer to share their ideas as the study progressed (JR, Dec. 5). Having experienced the importance of trust, I am led to question, how much trust is necessary before DH can be attempted and what level of trust is sufficient for DH to be a useful process? While neither of these questions were addressed in this study, what can be stated is that trust is central to DH and was vitally important to the consociates.

The professional attitude of the staff was clearly evident in their willingness to allow dissenting opinions even if it was frightening for some and confusing for others. At one point Summer was trying to figure out what she had witnessed and was concerned that there were personality clashes and confrontation (JR, Jan. 5). But the need to address alternative ways of seeing was discussed and accepted as necessary if change was to take place. The staff members were committed to making change happen and were willing to take the scrapes and bruises (Monty, TI, Jan. 31) to get them where they needed to go. Monty called it “learning to celebrate our differences” (TI, Jan. 31). Kim, who admitted disliking conflict, saw the need to allow dissenting voice and although she continued to feel uncomfortable with conflict, she wanted dissenters to feel free to speak and valued their input (TI, Jan. 29). Red felt it was important to deal directly with problems. “It is noble and good
to work together to overcome problems rather than slipping them under the carpet or leave them for someone at the top" (TI, Jan. 27).

The use of inclusionary language was evident in the staff meeting when the implementation of DH was used for the first time. Terri said that she wanted to hear from the quiet people who had not spoken (FNR, Aug. 26). The staff were often encouraging the less vocal people to speak. After one staff meeting in which we discussed issues about what we thought was important for the school and what was unimportant, Kim talked about feeling that the discussion might have made some staff members feel excluded (SI, Nov. 13). Later she expressed a similar concern in a reflective group meeting. She wrote, "I am hopeful that I and a few didn't dominate the talk. I feel the need to get in the habit of asking quiet members what their thoughts are in a small group" (JR, Jan. 14).

The staff's searching to find a way to encourage more participation by the quiet members in the dialogue was an example of their desire to invite and include. The staff spent a great deal of time considering this issue. They persevered and decided to signal a wish to speak by raising of a hand and then having the leader recognize the person when it was time for them to speak. In that way the leader could make sure that the people who had not spoken were given an opportunity to express their views (MRG, Oct. 31). Several staff members also expressed a desire to use DH instead of voting because of the way it made everyone feel included. Monty talked about how terrible it would be to feel alone (TI, Jan. 31).

The amount of carry over into other situations has been indicated in various places in Chapter Five. There were examples of the use of DH in family settings (Celeste, JR, Jan. 14; Lynne, SI, Nov. 5; Terri, TI, Feb. 6), the desire to use it in non-school based meetings (Rosebud, JR, Oct. 24; Sarah, SI, Nov. 1), and use of the major elements of DH in meetings outside of the school.
(Sarah, TL, Jan. 28; Sharon, TL. Feb. 5). In recounting her leadership in a community sports activity, Sharon said:

I did things differently. I talked to parents about an issue that was coming up. They had time to think about it before we had to decide. Then we let parents say whether they could live with a decision or not. I think doing it that way we got more honest feedback. This research has spread out to other areas. I won’t ever think the same about meetings. (Sharon, TL, Feb. 5)

The number and variety of incidences where all or parts of DH have been used indicates that this process resonates with the consociates in a vital way. The number of staff members who said that they would not go back to the way things were as well as expressing a desire to convince a new principal of the importance of DH means that this process has fostered for them a setting in which they feel they are valued and one in which they can make good decisions for their students.

In Chapter Two the idea was presented that the development of community depends on the bonding together of people that results from their mutual commitment to a common goal, shared set of values, and shared concept of being (Sergiovanni, 1994, p. 6). Lieberman (1988, p. 649) sets some expectation that she feels must be met to achieve community in a school. This study met these expectations to varying degrees. Her first contention is that there needs to be a community of leaders in a school. The statements of the administrators and the staff at Inkonze reflect their belief that each person was encouraged to take a leadership role. This shared leadership meant that the principal and vice-principal had to give up areas in which they normally had control. This “giving up” of power was seen in Mary and Monty’s willingness to allow others to lead the monthly staff meeting.

Lieberman’s second, third and fourth criteria were that teachers must have opportunities to take on more responsibilities, more decision-making power, and more accountability. These opportunities at Inkonze ranged from staff taking on leadership responsibility in the staff meetings to making
decisions about what would or would not be an initiative for the school. Lieberman believes that teachers must have a large share of the responsibility for seeing to it that students are actively engaged in learning and have the time and resources to do the job right. Inkonze staff was actively involved in implementing changes to improve education for students. The staff has been quoted as believing that the needs of students came first. Monty and Nan were excellent examples. Monty repeatedly asked, “Are we making this decision for the good of the students?” (JR, Sept. 9), and Nan talked about being able to focus more effectively because of the common goal of “being here for the students” (TI, Jan. 27). The issue of time and resources in this context were not addressed in this study but were noted as a concern by many. Feeling of frustations about the lack of time and resources had at times a predictably negative effect on the decision making process.

The fulfillment of Lieberman’s final expectation, that staff must be supported through the rough times as they struggle with new ways of working together, was evident in this study. One of the most profound findings was the commitment the staff, including the administrators, felt towards one another. Even when we were experiencing chaos, conflict, and frustrations, the staff continued to come together and support each other rather than retreating to a isolationist mentality. One of the best images of this phenomenon was Monty’s reflection on the December staff meeting in which he said, “I remember feeling upset by the meeting in December, but the meeting in January went very well. We have moved from “all my fault” to “all our fault” when things go wrong” (TI, Jan. 31).

During this study it seemed that the degree of community increased and each person has her/his own perception on the amount of that increase. Each consociate has changed as a result of this study but the change that has taken place has resulted from each person’s personal agenda as well as
their agenda for the staff. In a like manner, each person's view of community and the degree of change was reflected in her/his own view of reality. Understanding and valuing the diversity of the staff has been a valuable component in the development of community.

The Bridgeable Gulf

Theory and practice are not distinct entities, confronting each other across an unbridgeable gulf; each contains elements of the other.... Theory and practice need each other, and thus comprise mutually indispensable phases of a unified change process. Together they present the strongest case for practitioner action research as an activity which represents both a powerful, vigorous and worthwhile form of practical professionalism and a powerful, vigorous and valid form of social inquiry. (Winter, 1996, p. 25)

The staff's sojourn through theory and practice in this study was at times a convoluted one. A look at the activities involved in this research and the way in which the activities were used by the staff gives a clearer view of our perceptions about the theoretical underpinnings of the study. This view provides a way to see how we put these theories into practice, and what we believed to be true at the culmination of the study.

Practice

The activities undertaken in this study were numerous. Many were part of the plan (some were my initiatives, some the staff's) at the beginning of the study, while others were implemented as the reflective cycle continued. My presentation at the beginning of the year was used to explain in part the theory behind DH. The staff was introduced to action research and its connection to theory building and school change. They were also given an overview of the essential components of DH and its affiliation to the Society of Friends' (Quakers) way of making decisions. The importance of reflecting and the need to write in reflective journals was also communicated.
I requested that the staff write in their reflective journals once a week for several reasons. I needed to know what the staff members were thinking, the questions they were asking themselves, and what they did not understand. Also, they needed to have a record of their own thoughts and feelings so they could reflect during the study. A third use of the journals developed as the study progressed. The journals were the medium the staff used to dialogue with me on issues of significance to them. At the beginning I was hesitant to write in their journals but several consociates expressed dismay when I returned the journals with no notations. As a result, I made comments and answered questions each time I read them. Because of these notations, many PD activities were initiated or modified. As well, I chose the leaders for our staff meeting using the journals as the basis for finding people who fit the Inkonze modified, Quaker profile of leader. These journals proved invaluable to me in the double loop learning process because I was given information to which no one else was privy. I automatically had feedback about what I had and had not done and learned some behind the scenes struggles that some of the staff were undergoing. I used the information from the journals to write letters to the staff about questions they had expressed or concerns I had. Eight letters in all were written.

I also realized how fortunate I was to have access to the thoughts and feelings of all the consociates so I asked the staff for permission to share anonymously quotations from their journals with the whole staff. I put their quotations up in the staff room on a DH bulletin board. I also put sheets of paper in their mailboxes each week so that the staff could ask questions or make statements anonymously when they did not feel free to have their name noted even to me. The information from these notes were used as quotes for the bulletin board as well. An example of some of the quotations used were: "DH's understanding is growing. We are all improving in its usage. The labour
pains are passing and the new creation is imminent." "Raising of hands went well. The leader kept in touch and everyone was able to listen and not worry about having the opportunity to speak." "Trust had to develop for some people to feel safe." "I like DH better than voting. In voting you tend to think one way and follow that thought. Leaving ideas open to discussion gives you new ideas." "The hat' issue was the first time students were able to influence others and change something important to them. When the students found out the outcome, the students cheered and clapped for the two who presented" (BB, Nov. 18)\textsuperscript{10}.

While many of the staff members found journal writing onerous, they expressed a willingness to share their opinions and ideas freely in the individual interviews. After they learned they could trust me, even the tape recorder did not appear to inhibit them. These interviews gave the staff a chance to express their own thoughts and opinions. Other than a list of optional questions I had in my own mind during the interviews in case some one could think of no issues to address, the staff were free to discuss, question, or examine any issue having to do with the study that they wished in the first two interviews. In the last interview I gave them a list of questions to consider but explained that they were free to discuss or not discuss these questions. They were also invited to bring up any other topic of their choice. The questions for the third interview were: (1) Describe your feelings about your involvement in the implementation of DH. (2) What have been the most beneficial aspects of the research project (ie, reflective meetings, self learning, my presence, etc.) for you? (3) What have been the most troublesome aspects (ie, reflective meetings, self learning, my presence, etc.) for you? (4) What advice would you give the next researcher who approached your staff about an action research project? (5) Knowing what you know now, would you

\textsuperscript{10} This document is the bulletin board (BB) quotations on November 18. All references to data taken from the bulletin board quotations will follow a similar format.
still be willing to join this research project? (6) What have you learned about yourself, the staff, the school community as a result of this research? (7) If you could choose for the staff, what form of decision making would you choose? While these questions may have been somewhat constraining for some, many staff members liked the idea of having them prior to the interview to help with their reflections.

In the meeting prior to school commencement, Mary, Monty and I talked about the need to use at least some of their designated PD time to discuss and refine DH. It was decided that together with the PD committee, soon to be struck, we would use the PD activities to assist in the implementation of DH, Quality School, and families. One PD half-day in October was devoted to understanding Bohm's (1991) concept of dialogue and the difference between dialogue and discussion. Using dialogue we then talked about what we were doing well and what we were not doing well in the school.

Leading up to this PD day, I became aware that I was privy to a great many resources concerning the basics of DH that included books and journal articles on community, dialogue, Quaker decision making, and leadership that the staff did not have readily available to them. I made these books and articles available to the staff so that they could do some reading about the issues that were becoming part of our world.

The way in which the activities were used was a learning process. We learned what was significant and what was less significant in the study. Having been a teacher for many years I understood how busy the staff at a school is and how much I would be asking of the staff to undertake this study with me. I wrestled with how involved I should become in the life of the school. I was fortunate enough to have been awarded a McDowell grant so that the staff could be given some release time for all the extra time they would spend on the study. But this grant did not relieve me from feeling the need to help
and care for the staff and to become one of them rather than the outside expert. As a result, I team taught with several teachers, went on field trips, and taught DH to four classes. As well, I provided snacks at staff meetings throughout the year as a way of demonstrating my appreciation to all the staff.

One of the activities that “just happened” was the debriefing, “sounding board” time I spent with Mary and Monty. These times were not set, nor did they have agendas. We simply talked when we felt the need. The insights gained and the support given during these times were invaluable. During these sessions I learned a great deal about the traditions of Inkonze and the leaders in the school. We reflected on disappointments and celebrated successes. Keeping in touch in this way, I believe helped to keep us on track and moving in a way that was beneficial for all.

**Theory**

As stated earlier, “the meaning social actions have for participants” was the basis of this study (Aldrich, 1992, p. 18). Examining what was important to the consociates in the decision making process led to that “commonsense knowledge” about which Berger and Luckmann (1966, p. 15) talk. Reading about and discussing the essential elements of the DH process held little meaning or value for the staff until we attempted to use what we learned in the school setting. We lived the reality of the importance of developing trusting relationships, reinforced the significance of leadership style, developed an appreciation for acknowledging differences, and gained new perspectives about ourselves and each other. Indeed, we did increase our understanding about “where [we] are, where [we] have been and where it is possible to go” (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 24).
Where We Are

Inkonze School staff found themselves in the midst of change. They were attempting to implement changes that would have an effect on the students and staff in substantial ways. These changes required that the staff make decisions from the first day of school that would influence what they did throughout the year. While decision making was vital to them individually and collectively, they had not, before the introduction of DH, examined what kind of decision making process would be most beneficial for them. The reality of how important the process was became an explicit issue only after the study began.

While the use of power was present in this study, it was not explicitly studied. The staff realized the importance of sharing power when they talked about empowerment. Early in the study, during discussions we became aware of the staff members who wielded the power and often controlled the decisions of the staff. As the study progressed the need to share power was highlighted by many of the staff when they talked about valuing others' voices and needing to hear what quiet members had to say. There was recognition of the need to share power when many of the staff talked about everyone needing to win and having no losers.

The complexity of the decision making is addressed by Napier and Gershenfeld (1993):

Decision making is at the center of our being. A thousand times each day we make decisions, sometimes casually, almost without thought, responding to long-established routine. Who we are as decision makers is no more or less complex than who we are as people. The web of factors influencing us can be incredibly complex: our cultural backgrounds, parents, schooling, feelings of attractiveness, social status, religion, and general level of achieved success. Add to this mix our willingness to risk, our dreams, goals, fears, biases, and a hundred other variables, and you begin to have some idea of how complex even our most casual or spontaneous decisions might really be. Now place five or six, ten or twenty such complex individuals together, attempt to develop an agreed-upon decision, and the potential differences seem almost beyond
comprehension. (p. 324)

Appreciating the complexity of the decision making process was one of the many realizations that the staff described. We all came to the understanding that learning a new way to make decisions meant we had to learn a new way of being. On one hand, many people reported frustration about how long it took for us to learn “to do” DH. On the other hand, many people commented on how difficult making fundamental, second-order change can be.

Where We Have Been

The staff related times when they were uncomfortable with the way in which decisions had been made in the past, but had not explored the assumptions on which they had based their decision making process. Mary talked about not liking the way decisions had been made (SI, Nov. 5), Monty discussed wanting to find a more effective way of making decisions (TI, Jan. 31), and some staff highlighted a discontentment with the way Quality School and families had been chosen as the change initiatives the preceding year.

As Monty noted, in schools it seems we often fail to examine and study what we do and why we are doing it (FI, Sept. 4). The need to examine the most basic of our assumptions was introduced by Kim when she talked about needing to examine the purpose of staff meetings (JR, Oct. 24). The need to assess our basic beliefs was an outcome of some of the PD activities. In particular, studying Bohm’s definition of dialogue and the contrast he drew between dialogue and discussion promoted a close look at what had happened in the past and where we needed to go in the future.

Where It Is Possible to Go

DH is built on authentic consensus and shared decision making. In the process of defining exactly how DH would look and play itself out at Inkonze,
the staff came to some conclusions about what components of this process were meaningful to them and which components needed modification.

As has been noted, trusting relationships were pivotal to all the consociates. Trustworthy leadership was seen as fundamental element if productive, effective decisions were to be made. The need to say what we felt and know that there were not going to be repercussions from the administrators or other staff members was fundamental. Building trusting relationships became a significant part of the process.

One of the main requirements of DH was for the administrators to share leadership. Sharing leadership meant sharing the power that is traditionally seen as belonging to the leaders. Sharing in the decision making process was vital to the sharing of power. The degree that the staff needed to share in the decision making process was influenced by the way in which the staff saw the issues being discussed affecting them and their students. The staff agreed that they needed to be able to have a say about whether they could or could not accept a decision. While most decisions were made by the staff as a whole, some decisions were made for the staff either by the administrators, community coordinator, or a committee with the proviso that anyone could say “no, I can not live with this decision.” The need for the staff to have some power and control over the things about which they felt deeply became obvious.

I proposed in the beginning that the leader of the group decision making process be a facilitator only. But the staff felt that meetings were still being “run” by the vocal members of the group and therefore, requested a more formal, strong leadership style be used. While everyone agreed that the leader needed to be a quieter, less impassioned person, the leader needed to take ownership for keeping everyone on task, to control the number of times one person spoke, and to encourage active participation by more people. The role
that the dialogue leader took was seen to directly affect the way in which decisions were made and the effectiveness of those decisions.

Everyone reported at one point or another that through this process they saw growth in their becoming more collegial, collaborative, and empowering. They also related a belief that developing these skills resulted in using DH more productively and resulted in building community. While the frustration that the staff experienced has been delineated, their willingness to continue working to further develop their use of DH demonstrates that they felt that striving to become more collegial, collaborative, and empowering was a worthwhile goal.

In using DH the commitment that the staff felt toward the decisions was increased. This commitment to consensual decisions is a well recognized phenomenon (Schweiger, Sandberg, & Ragan, 1986; Tjosvold & Field, 1983) and is one of the reasons that the staff was willing to struggle through the process to learn DH. The staff recognized that when everyone won the feeling of ownership and commitment improved. As well, they recognized the value of having multiple perspectives. Increased commitment was seen as beneficial for staff and students and was a fundamental element in successfully implementing the change initiatives.

**I-witnessing**\(^{11}\)

In interpreting qualitative data “I-witnessing,” according to Wolcott (1994), offers two options; “this is what I make of it all” and “this is how the research experience affected me” (p. 44). I would also suggest that it includes how I influenced the learnings, reflections, conclusions of the consociates and therefore, the outcomes of the study. Wolcott (p. 44) also believes that personal reflection once begrudgingly tolerated is now not only accepted but

\(^{11}\) Term found in Wolcott, 1994, p. 44. He gives credit to Geertz (1988) for coining the term.
expected. As well, he encourages the researcher to “explain what seems to be
holding you back or what pieces of the puzzle are still missing” (p. 44). Reason
(1988) wrote:

Critical subjectivity is a quality of awareness in which we do not
suppress our primary subjectivity experience; nor do we allow
ourselves to be overwhelmed and swept along by it; rather we
raise it to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process....
The notion of critical subjectivity means that we are more
demanding than orthodox science, insisting that valid inquiry is
based on a very high degree of self-knowing, self-reflection, and co-
operative criticism. Good co-operative inquiry is both
wholeheartedly involved and intensely self-critical. (p. 13)

Throughout this study I found myself questioning my motives, reflecting and
reflecting again on why I was doing or not doing various activities.

Hall (1996, p. 29) feels that reflexivity is not only an integral part of
action research, but needs to be a more obvious component. She explains
that reflexivity is a deliberate attempt to:

(1) monitor and reflect on one’s doing of the research -- the
    methods and the researcher’s influence on the setting -- and act
    responsively on these methods as the study proceeds; and
(2) account for researcher constitutiveness. This process
    begins with being self-conscious (to the extent that this is possible)
    about how one’s doing of the research as well what one brings to it
    (previous experience, knowledge, values, beliefs and a prior
    concepts) shapes the way the data are interpreted and treated.
    An account of researcher constitutiveness is completed when
    awareness is incorporated in the research report. (p. 30)

Learning to be reflexive was a vital part of this study for me. Understanding
how my assumptions, beliefs, and ways of sharing affected the staff became
an omnipresent concern that I had failed to understand fully at the beginning
of this research.

Two questions that colleagues raised for me were: (1) does AR force
(encourage) us to see ourselves as we really are or does it make it more
difficult to truly reflect on our acts and actions as we are faced with issues we
want to hide? and (2) since our research changes us, how much of these
changes should be reported? These questions remained uppermost in my mind
as I attempted to give a clear picture of my part in this project.

The Friends

If my involvement in this study is to be fully revealed, then I must start at the beginning. My trip to the Society of Friends yearly meeting in March of 1996 was the point at which I decided that the Quakers’ way of decision making held promise in my quest to find a way to help teachers make decisions that would encourage the implementation of changes that have the potential for improving education for students. The reason for this conclusion can be seen in my journal reflections. On the first day I wrote about a recommendation (called a minute by the Friends) that was not acceptable to those in attendance. I commented,

The clerk summarizes by saying that there is a need for the committee to take the minute back to be reconsidered with the new concerns in mind. The Worship and Ministries (W&M) clerk [chairperson of the committee] refuses and hands it to another “more appropriate” committee. I feel this indicates that the W&M [committee] doesn’t feel tied to or have ownership for the minute. They gave it to the meeting, now the meeting must decide [what is to be done]. (SFN, March 20)\textsuperscript{12}

I felt that this giving of a recommendation or idea as a gift to the group was significant and I remarked later in that same journal entry, “At no time did anyone speak again to support their point. Even when some questions were asked, some other friend would respond to the question [rather than the person who had made the original statement]. Each speaker was followed by silence, some longer than others. There was never debate” (SFN, March 20). I perceived this process to be a very productive one since dialogue was not limited and dissenting voices were heard. When the issue in question was resolved several days later, the solution was acceptable to everyone and incorporated many ideas that had not been addressed in the first

\textsuperscript{12} This document is the Society of Friends Notes (SFN) March 20, 1996. All references to data taken from the Society of Friends Notes follows a similar format.
recommendation.

On the second day of the Friends’ meeting, I saw the importance of leadership style. That day a second clerk (discussion leader) took over the meeting. The difference in the style of leadership between the two clerks was apparent. I wrote,

I was struck at that time [during an individual interview] about how strong he [the second clerk] is. He seems much more “controlling” than the first clerk. She [the first clerk] has a calm air about her and is serene and peaceful. She has a soft smile even in repose. He comes off as strong. He has a stern appearance.... The evening session was rife with disagreement that in the main were left unaddressed. There was some grumbling around me about the meeting during and after the session.... I wonder how much this [grumbling] is due to the clerk’s style in finding the “sense of the meeting.” (SFN, March 21)

The need for a calm, sensitive leader became evident during my visit with the Friends. But the need for a leader who was seen as sensitive and strong without being strident became apparent to me during the study at Inkonze.

The original clerk, who was again chairing the meeting during the third day, suggested that due to the dissidence generated the day before, everyone should be given time to react to the issues and ideas generated. Sheets for written questions, ideas, and concerns were posted in the general socializing area so that comments could be made. These sheets provided everyone with an opportunity to read and react to questions, concerns and ideas presented by other Friends (SFN, March 22). These sheets seemed to promote discussion and a free flow of ideas. Therefore, when the staff at Inkonze ran into a particularly rough time I suggested that we post chart paper in the staff room for people to write their comments and concerns.

On the final day of the meetings, the advantage of reading the minutes at the end of each session became apparent to me. Often people would say there needed to be some change of wording that more closely reflected the sense of the meeting. As well, a few times issues were readdressed although
in a much more limited sense than had been done previously. The reading and correcting of the minutes, called gathering, seemed to bring closure to the meeting and refreshed everyone on what they had accomplished and the need, if any, for further investigation or follow-up. My notes read, “This summary is then followed by quiet time in which anyone may speak but is not required. This time allows for reflection on the substance of the meeting as well as allowing time to reframe ideas presented” (SFN, March 26) At my recommendation, we decided at Inkonze to read the decisions reached at the end of the meeting. Several people remarked to me in casual conversation how much they liked this procedure. They felt it encouraged them to reflect and reminded them of any responsibilities that they had incurred during the meeting.

**Shoulders of Giants**

“Standing on the shoulders of giants” is a phrase often quoted to indicated the growth and progress we make because of the ideas and insights given to us by others. I have enjoyed the opportunity to read and reflect on the ideas presented by various authors. Without these giants, many of the ideas and activities that I incorporated in this project would not have existed. I shared these ideas with the staff verbally, in PD activities, and by placing information from many authors at the staff’s disposal. Torbert (1991), Reason (1988), and Peck(1993), to name just a few, led me to realize that chaos and turmoil were to be expected anytime fundamental changes are attempted. If I had not realized how important this time of upheaval was, during the times the staff encountered difficulties we all would have been far more likely to give up. Torbert, in discussing the vital importance of experiencing difficult times, said:

*On the interpersonal scale, only uncomfortable habits and unique actions wake us up enough to permit a full meeting with another*
human being and, thereby, the possibility of mutual self-balancing, the possibility of self-balancing relationship of peers. But how many marriages or other friendships, business partnerships, or research teams cultivate such actions rather than comfortable habits and unexamined tensions? (p. 3)

At Inkonze we found that these difficult times led to some serious introspection by many of the consociates and produced the realization that we needed to grow and change.

One of the hardest but foundational skills we all needed to acquire was learning to dialogue rather than to discuss. We studied Bohm’s (Bohm & Edwards, 1991) ideas extensively and attempted to use his ideas of “talking with, not at” in our meetings. Learning to talk and listen differently was vital to the DH process. I do not believe that we could have reached authentic consensus without coming to an understanding of what dialogue was and how it felt, and appreciated its importance.

**Living Through DH**

At the beginning of his book on human inquiry Reason (1988) quotes Kabir as saying, “If you have not lived through something, it is not true” (n.p.). Having lived through the implementation of DH, it has become very “true” for me. During the study I was constantly asking myself how much of what the process was becoming had to do with my assumptions and values and how much was due to the staff’s input. Sorting through these issues as the study progressed meant I had to make some decisions on the “best guess” theory or “muddling through”. Whether or not the decisions I made were in the best interest of the staff is left up to the reader. I simply present some of the dilemmas and tensions I faced. I present these issues in the spirit of “reporting fully” and “letting readers ‘see’ for themselves” that Wolcott (1994, pp. 350-51) says is a must if qualitative research is to be considered valid. Reason (1994a) explains the dilemma I faced, “The process of action inquiry
sets the practitioner right in the contraction between deep engagement, participation and commitment to the moment; and simultaneous reflection, standing back, self-awareness" (p. 50).

One of the first decisions I had to make was how much information to share with the staff in the spring when I introduced my study to them. As I have reported, I chose to make a short presentation and let the staff ask questions. Of course, there were many other options open to me. I decided that keeping it simple was the best option due to hectic schedules at the end of the school year. At the end of the study, several staff members (when I asked them directly) stated that in the spring they really had not understood the study and what their commitment would be. They said that they think if they had understood the study better in the spring, the fall in-service would have been more effective. The question that I am now contemplating is did I keep a low profile in the spring to save the staff’s stress or was I concerned that if they knew too much that they might have said “no” to my study? Providing the requisite amount of information without overloading the staff at any given point is an issue for any action researcher to contemplate.

The issue of how much information to share with the staff was an ongoing concern for me. I have already presented the dilemma I felt about writing in their reflective journals. I was concerned also with how much and how often to give them professional reading material. There were several relevant issues: the information I shared was biased in that it reflected what I believed to be true; and the staff was extremely conscientious about reading the items I left for them. Was I overloading them by increasing their workload? Was I keeping them in the dark so that I would be seen as the expert and therefore, my process would not be too closely scrutinized? Since I was the staff’s main resource of professional material during the study, the material that I chose to share and the material I chose not to share did affect
the process and the outcome.

Attempting to ascertain whether or not I was successful in ensuring that "each party" in the study had an "equal opportunity to influence the other" as proposed by Clark (1972, p. 79) was difficult. Making sure that each voice was valued and heard and had equal access to expression in the reporting of this study was an issue that resulted in many hours of contemplation and several discussions with the consociates, especially the administrators. Due to the greater availability of the principal as compared to the rest of the staff my view of the school was directly affected by her perceptions. As well, I tended to use the quotations of the more vocal members of the staff more often. These people were the ones more likely to have casual conversations with me, talk in staff meetings, and write longer entries in their journals. As well, while I made a concerted effort to include everyone in all aspects of the study, I am sure I valued some people's insights more than others. In an effort to be equitable, I made sure that I shared the negative comments as often as I did the positive ones. Perhaps in doing so the proportions may have been skewed in that I may have given more voice to the people who were questioning or were critical than those who were personally affirming to the others on staff and to me and who made positive comments about DH.

The Conceptual Framework

In reviewing the framework for DH that I proposed at the beginning of this study, I have become aware of the way some of the components stand out as being extremely important while others' are diminished. For the staff at Inkonze, being able to come to agreement meant having strong leadership and learning to dialogue. Once we were able to define what a leader should be and learned how to dialogue coming to authentic consensus was relatively
easy. There was no need to dwell on cooperation, dissent, or sense of the meeting for each of these components seemed to develop naturally.

There were elements of shared decision making that the staff already valued and practiced as well. They collaborated as often as possible and took for granted that they needed to be collegial. But they learned to value and strive for empowerment. They developed an understanding of the need to share power if they were to share in the leadership of the school and develop a win/win attitude.

At the beginning I proposed that authentic consensus and shared decision making were built on trust. This belief was not only confirmed but magnified by this study. Trust, as has been emphasized, was the foundation of DH and was seen by the staff as vital for making effective changes.

**Implications for Theory and Practice**

While this study does not provide a blueprint for change, either in the specific instance of decision making or in the more global context of change initiatives, it does provide some insights into what was important to the staff, to the decision making process, and in instituting change. This study was based on the assumption that what people think and feel is worth studying and how they are included or excluded from decision making matters. The project suggests implications for anyone involved in decision making and school restructuring and raises many questions as well.

**What Is Important to the Staff**

If school staff are going to be supportive of the undertakings of their school, whether that undertaking be “Meet the Teacher Night” or learning to be a Quality School, they need to know that what they think and feel matters. The consociates often talked about how “cared for” they felt when their
personal calendars and family commitments were considered when dates were set at various times during the year. Being included in small details became less important to them as they realized that they had a say in all areas of the school life. They were willing to allow others to make "less important" decisions for them because they had a way to signal disagreement if needed.

Knowing that their ideas and contributions were valued, the staff were able to be more caring toward others. They were able to see how much each person had to share and were able to provide support in ways that had not been possible before. The staff extended this care toward their students and were willing to help them learn to care for others. Learning to listen to each other and value the ideas of others was a pivotal step in creating community. The realization that everyone had ideas to contribute whether or not they had been spoken led to everyone feeling that they had voice at the school.

The distribution of power was changed dramatically during the course of this study. Many of the people who had been the most powerful in the school became more aware of their position of power as did many of the ones without the power base. Having the power base become more obvious was a natural if, at times problematic, part of the study. An important step in empowering the staff meant attempting to move toward power equity by recognizing who had the power. During this study, everyone was invited to reflect about their own position and decide how they affected the group process. Power was not just an issue for the administration. While everyone was encouraged to reevaluate their roles, many people did change some of their traditional roles.

For DH to be implemented, the administrators have to change the way in which they relate to the staff and to alter expectations of their administrative roles. One obvious example of sharing leadership was when the administrators were willing to allow the staff to take the role of leader in
the staff meetings. Shared leadership was valued by the staff and showed in a visible way that the administrators trusted and valued them. Also, the administrators gave the staff ownership over decisions that were made. The staff had the responsibility of deciding how to carry out group decisions while the principal and vice-principal took seriously their obligation to support them in these decisions. These changes in the relationship between staff and administration were based on trust and were an outgrowth of the trusting relationship that developed.

Trusting relationships were an integral part of the DH process. Staff needed to know that they would not be demeaned if in trying something new they were unsuccessful. DH meant that we were often unsure of where we were and where we were going much less how we were going to get there. The staff found that they were able to go through these uncertain times because they had the support of their colleagues. Collaborating in meaningful ways meant letting others see their weakness and their failures. Spending time together collaborating in reflective groups on concerns and issues of importance for all staff helped produce an appreciation of the each person’s talents. These times helped illuminate some of the assumptions they held about each other and educating students. These collaborative activities promoted trusting relationships.

Feeling that they were all working together was an indispensable part of the study for most of the staff. When they focused on what they valued and realized that they were all emphasizing the needs of students, they were more willing to be accommodating to others. This insight developed through group dialogue at staff meetings and in reflective groups as well as through their own quotes I shared with them. During a more traditional staff meeting often what surfaced was differences rather similarities. Staff needed to know what others were thinking and valuing to come to appreciate others and
therefore "pull together."

While the staff valued having input into decisions, they also did not want endless staff meetings. Working together to solve the problems endemic to DH produced a pride in accomplishing something worthwhile. The staff was able to produce creative solutions to difficult problems. In dealing with the problem of the amount of time spent in the staff meeting they developed a plan to allot ten minutes at the beginning of each staff meeting to read through the items of information that did not need discussion unless someone indicted a wish to do so. They also defined leadership for their staff meeting in a completely new way and devised a way for anyone to signal a wish to speak so that the staff could hear from more people. In working through these problems the staff gained new insights into the thinking of others. They used these opportunities in many cases to "see as others see."

The Decision Making Process

Using DH to make decisions had an instantaneous effect on the staff. They wrote in their journals at the beginning of the study about the need to share discussion time. Those who were outgoing and accustomed to having a major say in the decisions reflected on ways to encourage others to speak. The quiet ones said that the process had provided them with a way to have voice in the group. But as Napier and Gershenfeld (1993) emphasize "even a change that promises positive results can cause people to be doubtful and threatened by the unknown that will change group norms" (p. 158).

The process raised everyone's consciousness about group dynamics and exposed the perfections and imperfections of group members. DH provided a forum for helping the staff deal with issues that normally go unexamined. Hidden agendas were exposed. In exposing some of the agendas, such as the need to control, the need to avoid conflict, and to be liked, the staff
struggled with their feelings about themselves and others. Because they were treated as professionals and given space and support to see and deal with personal issues, by the end of the study each person could indicate some area of personal and staff growth.

While learning to reflect was a difficult skill to develop, the benefit of using reflection time in making decisions was apparent. The consociates talked about needing this reflection time to understand an issue and to be able to respond appropriately. They talked about how frustrating it was not having reflection time in other meetings. Not only did they find reflection time freeing but it gave the quieter people, who we seldom heard from in a meeting, the opportunity to have a say. Apparently reflection time is far more significant than I had thought at first. When reflection time is not part of the decision making process, it is likely that many creative ideas go unvoiced.

DH also promoted sharing of information. Since everyone was responsible for the outcome of the decisions made, they all had “a need to know.” Information was shared freely and resulted in decisions that were based on all the known facts. The staff then felt in control of what was happening in their school and had no reason to question the motivation of others. This sharing of information and responsibility may have resulted in the comment that Kim (TI, Jan. 29) made about there being no complaining about the decisions made after the staff meeting was over.

At various times during the study the staff talked about the significance each of the elements of authentic consensus and shared decision making held for them. The way that the staff viewed consensus at the culmination of the study was similar to Schmuck et al.’s (1972, p. 258) in that they saw group consensus as a method by which everyone shared their ideas and thoughts and the final decision. The staff also found the end result to be a willing acceptance of the group’s conclusions (sense of the meeting) as
espoused by the Quakers (Likert & Likert, 1976, p. 146). The staff felt that dialoguing was an integral part of the process and agreed with the conclusions drawn by Buber (1957, p. 238) that in dialogue each person learns to value the other. An integral part of learning to value others was developing an appreciation for the dissenting voice as described by Partridge (1971, pp. 67-68). Through the problems that developed, the staff learned that cooperation was a necessity. But the consociates also determined that it was necessary for their decision making and learning process to be built on trust.

The staff demonstrated the increased commitment that shared decision making is purported to produce (Sergiovanni, 1984; Meadows, 1990). The benefits of shared leadership, collaboration, and collegiality, as was suggested by writers such as Barth (1990), Lieberman (1993), and Maeroff (1988a), was seen in the way the staff modified and molded DH so that it was an effective process for helping them improve education for their students by promoting the implementation of their chosen changes. This study also confirmed the importance of empowerment as described by Mertens and Yarger (1988, p. 35). The staff, as has been reported in Chapter Five, talked about feeling empowered and as a result strove to empower their students. Learning to work together so that all consociates were winners was a pivotal element in coming to agreement with which everyone could live and share the responsibility of making decisions.

Instituting Change

The consociates reported the belief that DH had helped and was continuing to help them implement their chosen change initiatives. They felt that it had given them a process for making important decisions about how things were to be done at Inkonze and therefore, helped them find solutions to problems and work through the day-to-day reality of instituting changes. As
has been noted, the staff often mentioned the close connection between DH and Quality Schools and reported feeling that the shared elements of both meant that DH successfully helped them put into practice the things they had learned at the Control Theory workshop.

Glasser (1990) talks about the importance of valuing students, promoting trust, and respecting the student’s quality world. DH promoted these same values as important for the staff. This overlap appears to have enabled the staff to better understand the basic tenets of Quality School. It seemed that the staff’s feeling of being supported and cared for was vital as they valued and cared for the students. The significance of the connection between DH and the change initiatives suggested that if change is to take place then the process for instituting that change must be compatible with and supportive of the chosen changes.

Inkonze became a learning organization as defined by Mitchell (1995) and Senge (1990). Reflection and reframing to improve their world was constantly evident. The staff could truthfully say that they were not “prisoners of their own thinking” but were using their experiences in creative ways to change their life at the school.

**Implications for Further Research**

While this study was conducted at one elementary school in an urban setting, the potential that DH holds as an important process for instilling change in a school setting is worth pursuing. It would be important to see if the findings at Inkonze were similar to what would be found in a secondary school, rural setting, or larger or smaller school. The results of this study present many questions. As highlighted earlier, what is the level of trust necessary if DH is to be an effective decision making process? Is it possible to use DH to build a level of trust if none exists? What would DH look like in
another setting? How would leadership be defined? How would another staff make use of reflection time? What would happen if the administrators needed to stay in control of the staff meeting? Is it possible to learn to dialogue and reflect without a formal learning process? Could DH be implemented without an outside advocate? How much did the personalities of the consociates have to do with the outcome of the study? Is there a direct connection between the process used to instill a change initiative and the process chosen to help implement that change? How important is being able to share in the decision making process to other groups in other context? What is necessary for DH to become institutionalized in a school?

The questions that are raised by this study are numerous and could lead others to ask questions about implementing change, decision making, the use of consensus, and the effects of synergy, to name a few. This study opens the door for anyone who wishes to extend their knowledge about people, the way they communicate, and the importance of valuing others.

Furthermore, this study raises some questions for action research and the action researcher. One of the first questions that surfaced for me is, should the action researcher only help the participants answer their own questions? Often school staff are so busy that they do not realize that they need to know the answer to a question. Some of the staff at Inkonze remarked about not understanding why they had done certain things a certain way until they became part of this research. So the first question leads to a second. Should an action researcher become involved with a group of people and then decide with them a question that seems to need to be asked?

Another question is, how important is it for a non-teacher (or non-group member) to learn about the context of a school (or organization) before attempting an action research project in a school (that organization)? I do not believe that I would have been as welcomed in the school if I had not
understood how busy a school staff is and kept my demands on everyone to a minimum. As well, how much did my acceptance in the school depend on my willingness to work with the staff in the classrooms?

Finally, how does a researcher withdraw gracefully from a group of people in which that researcher has become an integral part? Leaving Inkonze was difficult for me and to a large extent I feel that I just left. Of course I have returned but only minimally. I also extended an invitation to them to call me if they needed any further assistance that I could provide. But I am still left with the feeling that I walked out and shut the door. I am wondering how they feel.

At this point the best that I can offer my consociates is a faithful retelling of our exciting ride on the beast. This was indeed an adventure story, but an adventure story that leaves as many questions as answers.

Epilogue

Since reflection was an integral part of this study, naturally I began reflecting on the happenings that occurred at Inkonze from the time I first made contact with the principal to the last staff meeting that I attended. After the study was completed I took some time to step back and attempted to gain a larger perspective so that I could appreciate in a different way what we had all experienced. In doing so I am awe-stuck by the amount of growth we have all experienced. I saw first hand the professionalism of a school staff and the impact that these people had on the life of their students. While at times we struggled over how to communicate, how to dissent without recrimination, how to accept and appreciate differences, and how to share everything including power, we did develop a personal understanding of the importance of each person winning so that we all could win.

While some of the elements of DH were modified to fit the needs of this
staff, the basic structure has remained unchanged. The use of DH by Inkonze staff reinforced the need for the components that have been highlighted. I believe that DH will look different used in other situations by a new group of people but the assumptions on which it is based will remain the same.

The significance that we all place on being a valuable part of a group was emphasized again and again. The need to be heard that was manifest in learning to listen was an invaluable skill that we all took with us. We experienced the up-side-down thinking that Handy (1990) talks about. As one consociate said, none of us will ever think about group decision making in the same way again. We have lived through an adventure that invites us to become advocates for making changes that are important for ourselves and our students.
References


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Appendix A

Cast of Consociates
Appendix A

Cast of Consociates

Administrators

Mary was the principal. She had been at Inkonze for three years and had full time release. She was an experienced principal who also had spent many years as a classroom teacher.

Monty was the vice-principal. He taught the upper grades students half-time and had half-time administration release. He was an experienced classroom teacher and administrator.

Teaching Staff

Gina was considered general teaching staff and taught students in all the families. She had many years of experience and had been at Inkonze for several years. She was part-time at Inkonze.

Upper years

Sarah was an upper years teacher who had many years teaching experience and had been at Inkonze for several years. She, Monty, and Lou made up the upper years family.

Lou was an upper years teacher who had many years teaching experience and had been at Inkonze for several years.

Kalther was an intern and therefore left Inkonze in December. He taught upper years students.

Middle years

Madeline was new to Inkonze. This was her first year teaching. She, Lynne, Naomi, and Kirsten were the middle years teachers.

Lynne had a few years teaching experience and was new to Inkonze. She and Naomi shared a middle years classroom until the early arrival of Naomi’s baby.

Naomi was new to Inkonze the previous year and new to
teaching at that time as well. She left earlier than expected due to her baby’s early arrival.

**Kirsten** was new to Inkonze and had a few years teaching experience. She taught a middle years family.

**Early years**

**Ellen** was a early years teacher with many years of experience. She had taught at Inkonze for several years.

**Dana** was an experienced teacher who was returning to Inkonze after a leave. She and Terri were the early years family teachers.

**Terri** was a neophyte teacher who had been new to Inkonze the previous year. She taught early years students.

**Special needs**

**Kim** taught a special needs classroom. She was an experienced teacher who had taught at Inkonze for several years.

**Shirla** was a resource teacher who was new to Inkonze and new to this school system. She had taught for a limited time in another system. She was part-time at Inkonze and was on a temporary contract, therefore, she left Inkonze in December.

**Nan** was new to Inkonze but had many years of teaching experience as a resource teacher. She was part-time at Inkonze.

**Support Staff**

**Rosebud** was experienced in her position and was in daily contact with the community. She was new to Inkonze.

**Brown** had many years of experience at Inkonze and was often the first person the community, parents, and students met.

**Red** had many years of experience at Inkonze. He had done a great deal of reading about leadership issues.

**Celeste** was a teacher associate who had many years of experience at Inkonze.
Summer was a teacher associate who had many years of experience at Inkonze.

Sharon was a teacher associate who been at Inkonze for a few years.
Appendix B

Staff Meeting
September 5, 1996
Appendix B

Staff Meeting

September 5, 1996

An overview of this meeting is given. It is not an exact transcription. The quotations attributed to each person have been summarized at times for conciseness. The essence of the meeting has been maintained.

The meeting began at 2:30 p.m. after a lavish lunch prepared by two of the staff members. (This duty is shared by each staff member during the year.) Due to a leaking roof in the LRC the meeting was held on the third floor in a large open space where assemblies were held. The tables were arranged in a circle.

Mary: We will begin by talking about consensual decision making. Jayne.

Jayne: A couple of reminders, every one has agreed to give me their journals on Thursdays after the mini-staff meeting. If anyone has a problem with this you need to let me know. I will try to get them back to you on Friday. As well, I will give you a summary of your interviews. If there are any corrections or deletions to be made, please give them back to me. These are summaries not transcripts. I did use your exact words in most places but I did change wording or the order of sentences at times. If I misunderstood your meaning let me know.

Monty: (Comment not decipherable.)

Laughter

Jayne: In the interviews it seems to be a recurring theme that people are frustrated with trying to do the reflection time in between when other people are talking.

Loud speaker interruption
Laughter
Jayne: Everyone seems to want to reflect so a couple of ideas have surfaced. So what I would like to do is spend some time to come to a decision about reflecting time. First, I need someone who is willing to record. Naomi: I will then I won’t have to do it again. Right?
Jayne: That’s right. The suggestions that were made were (we are open to other suggestions) have a talking stone as aboriginal people do or as Monty suggested have chips that you have to use if you want to speak. That way you would pause before you speak. You can say you like one of these or that you think we can remember on our own. Anyone have ideas about that?
PAUSE
Mary: Is the problem that someone is dominating?
Jayne: What was said to me is that we are not pausing and sometimes we are repeating or not thinking about our response before we respond. Part of DH is having that pausing time. I didn’t hear anyone saying that someone was dominating.
PAUSE
Jayne: Do I take by your silence that you are happy with trying to remember to reflect? I need to hear what you are thinking.
Lou: I wonder if it will happen as things calm down. I don’t have time to think about it now but I will. It would not be good to be pressured. While reminders are good I don’t want to be pressed.
Terri: I like the idea of passing a stone.
Dana: Are you talking for staff meetings or for everything?
PAUSE
Lou: I don’t want to dominate. But today we had a lunchtime meeting of our family and we had forty-five minutes to make decisions about camp and we went bang and we got the stuff done. I can see we could do that meeting in a
DH way when we have more time.
Monty: (Joking comment about reflecting.)
Laughter
Rosebud: I don't think the 5 second wait will slow down the meeting. It could make us more time effective. You think more about what is really important.
PAUSE
Jayne: What I am hearing is that you are happy with the way it is going. We will all try to remember to reflect. Maybe we will check later to see if that works. Does anyone have a problem with that?
PAUSE
Jayne: That seems to be a decision. We will work on it individually. Before we go on do you have any questions for me? As you are feeling the need for release time let me know. Thanks.
Mary: Monty? Oh I need to remind you to turn in request for furniture or text books. The deadline is next week.
Monty: I am going to pass out some information about things we are going to need to decide about in the next few weeks. There is a list of chemicals we need to be aware of and here is the way they need to be stored. It is in this binder and will be kept in the cabinet with the first aid information. There is also information about its proper use. It is also important to know the symbols. Make sure you put the symbols on yourself when you purchase things. On the back of the schedule as it is now there is a proposed supervision schedule.
Loudspeaker interrupts.
Laughter
Monty: Look at the schedule if there is a problem let me know.
Naomi: I don’t see my name on there.
Monty: I'll fix that. Moving on. There is a list of duties I complied from what
you turned in to me. Some things everyone wanted to do, some things no one wanted to do. So I put you somewhere. Do look at it. If there is a problem, let me know. This a proposed staff list. Prep time. Now that we have a gym schedule, what I would like for you to talk to Naomi and Lou to talk about prep time. Does that process seem okay. I also need your weekly time schedule. I will count all your minutes to make sure you have enough.

Laughter

Monty: Resource teachers have spilt up time to spend with each family. Meet with them to set up your schedules. They will discuss with you what they can do. These schedules will be flexible as special needs come up as the year goes on. It may not be a problem here but in other schools changing the schedule has been a problem. I will discuss your needs with the resource teacher. I talked to Gina. The time in the LRC on resource based learning is very important. She will help you as you have the need. Part of her function is working with the whole school.

Gina: I want you to be flexible in what you want for time periods. I want to work with people that I haven't worked with. If you have a particular time or unit, see me.

Terri: Does that mean you won't work with the primary family like you did last year?

Mary: No, it just means that we think that it would be better if she had some flexibility and that she won't be tied into the schedule for the whole year.

Dana: So we have lost Gina for our groups like we had last year?

Mary: You have not lost Gina but you will have to be flexible about when you have those groups. Gina may not be available when you want those groups.

Dana: I don't like this setup. We can't do what we did last year.

Mary: When Monty and I talked about last year we felt that everyone else had to work around those times and we need to be more flexible. Maybe we
need to get a volunteer in. I have asked Rosebud to get us some names of volunteers.

Monty: I think that crisis brings change so if we don’t have crisis we don’t change. Not that Gina is a crisis...

Laughter

Monty: We need team work. I would like for us to discuss later maybe at the next staff meeting having students in for the first fifteen minutes of the meeting. If we have decisions that affect them, they would have knowledge of this so they can express concerns. They will have some of the power that adults have. Like today students were asking why they have to go all the way downstairs to go to the washroom when there is a staff washroom on the third floor. That is giving them some say in changes and encourages them to be responsible. That encourages maturity being responsible. That is something for you to think about. Also, Mary and I talked about the importance of parents. We could have them at staff meetings. We could invite them to be part of our meetings. We could use them as allies in making change.

Jayne: Monty, can I make a suggest? Having to do with DH... One of the things I learned from the Quakers was that they had a threshing session. When people need to talk about something and they weren’t comfortable enough to make a decision, then no decisions were made. I think some people are finding students and parents in the meeting an emotional issue. Maybe at some point we could have a threshing session to discuss these items.

Monty: Yes, these are just to think about for now.

Mary: There is a paper in front of you. These are things that you can read. They need to be brought to your attention.

Some discussion surfaced about inappropriate behaviour by a teacher in another system.

Mary: We need to discuss appropriate dress. At a principal’s meeting Dr. X
told us that he didn’t think that it was appropriate for teachers to wear
cutoffs, clogs, and a tank top. We went from there, we discussed professional
dress. We will come back to that later at another meeting. Brown?
Brown: If you will look at these forms, I need them filled out.
Mary: Okay. Lunchroom duty. There were twenty-nine in the lunchroom
today. Some of those kids came in and ate and had already eaten breakfast.
So I am going to write a letter to the parents that says lunches and
breakfasts are for those times of the month when there are no groceries in the
house. And there will be a slip for the parents to fill out and return. Will you
make sure that kids know that this room is for when they need it? This way
we can control who is coming. I know it is hard but encourage the kids to bring
the form when they need a meal.
Kirsten: Can we talk about what happens in the lunchroom? I was in there
yesterday and it was a mob. It was just packed. The kids were done early but
there was nothing to do until the Flintstones came on. Can we have movies or
something?
Mary: Is there someone who is willing to check on movies?
Naomi: Even with the movies there would only be two kids watching and the
ten minute gap was hard for me because the kids are running around and
running upstairs. It is too much. Can we do something different?
Mary: Every year it is hard in the beginning. Let’s give this letter a chance.
Let’s see if it will make a difference. Can we do this?
Naomi: It would help to know who is not supposed to be there. How do we
know?
Mary: We don’t.
Naomi: If anybody can stay they should have a note?
Mary: Yeah.
Lou: Does it say on there that we don’t encourage...
Mary: Yes. Okay. Computers. We need to spend some time talking about computers. We have four Macintoshes now, Sarah hooked them up today. We need to decide how to use them and our staff computer (it is not a computer for kids). So Sarah will show us how to use them. We need to decide where we are going to put them.

Sarah: It needs to be a secure place. The 6 to 8 marks will be on them so it can’t be accessible to students. At any time... ever! I was looking for a place. I thought of Gina’s office. What do you think Gina?

Laughter

Gina: That’s fine.

Sarah: As well we have a good quality printer... We could put it in the staffroom but it has to be locked all the time. Another suggestion is Gina’s area. There’s Monty’s office. It doesn’t matter where it is as long as it is kept locked all the time.

Other suggestions were made about a possible location for the computer.

Lynne: I like Gina’s office because it is central for everyone in the school.

Mary: There is not much room.

Gina: That is a con... there would always be someone in there.

More comments were made about pros and cons on the location for the computers.

Sarah: Some of these places we wouldn’t know it there was in kid in there. In the library we could see for sure and know it was a kid.

Mary: Does anyone have difficulty with the computer in the library? Then that is what we will do.

Mary: We also have three other Macintosh computers.

Monty: I just wanted to comment. There are programs that we could use to keep the kids out of our records. We could use them and then the students could use all of the computers. We would all have a password to get into our
own records. We could all have access in the resource area. I am sorry if I
didn't wait the 5 seconds.

Mary laughs

Monty: Quit laughing. I hate to have something that someone else doesn't
have. I think we have the opportunity to let the students have maturity by
using a simple program.

Sarah: I'd like to comment on that.

Mary: Wait the 5 seconds.

Sarah: I waited plenty of time.

Some laughter.

Sarah: The only difficulty I have with that, Monty, is last year we had kids
 crash computers so we had to rebuild. I know the likelihood of that is not
great but I don't want to have to reenter my marks. It probably won't happen
with the primary kids but I don't want it to happen to me.

Nan: I like the idea of kids being able to use them.

Many private conversations were going on as well as comments were being made
agreeing with one side or the other.

Terri: I think the computer ought to be on the second floor where we can all
use it... kids, too. I think it is important for kids to use it.

Sarah: I don't like the computers where they get glitches every day, every day
so I have to call downtown and get help. The kids turn them off and on so
many times, they give the computers too many commands. So that is where
I am coming from. We need to have access. The kids have other computers.
If the kids crash it it will take six weeks or longer to get someone out to fit it.
That is my concern. What if it is the week before the grades go out?

Nan: Could we have someone who is responsible always be with the students
so nothing will happen?

Kim: Could we have a computer in everyone's classroom. Then it wouldn't be
a problem?

Dana: If we have a half hour prep time and we can't get to the computer, that is a problem.

Mary: Five! (Laughter) It is my turn to go! Last year we had the mouses' balls removed... everyone. We tried to organize the computer room last year. But it cost us a lot of money. Our kids don't have anything so they really want to take. We can think about Internet access later. Can we just decide where we are going to put the computer. Would you be comfortable making the decision today and then we can talk about the kids having use. Once you know how to use it, we can deal with the kids. I would just like to make a decision about where we put it. Then we can come back and talk about the kids using it. Are you comfortable with it being in Gina's office? Anybody not comfortable with that?

Lou: I would feel better with it in Mr. Y's old office. But I will go with the library. I think it would be quieter.

Sarah: I like the library better because I could call downtown easier.

Mary: We have three other Macintoshes. Two have the CD ROM. Now they are all located upstairs. Do we need to put them somewhere else.

Terri: Could we have one on each floor?

Dana: I would like to have access to them. I would like to use them.

Many individual conversations were going on. Some comments were made aloud about everyone needing access.

Sarah: One thing to think about is there is not much software for the Macs right now. (She describes the software.) We need to figure out how to keep track of the CDs because it doesn't work to keep them in the computer lab. Because last year I had to throw out many programs that were wrecked. That is a problem we need to address as well. How are we going to manage the software?
Lou: Those can not be put into the hard drive, correct?

Sarah: (Goes on at length about the problems with cataloging and keeping the computer room orderly.)

*Several people discussed how to keep the software safe and orderly. Then the conversation reverted to the best place to keep the computers. A back and forth debate between Lynne and Sarah took place about the best place for the software.*

Lynne: We are adults. Couldn't we make a commitment to put them back wherever we decide to store them?

Mary: Do we want to make a decision? Are you saying, "no?"

Sarah: I don't think we should leave it. I think we need to decide. If people are wanting the computer lab we need to make that decision then we take our kids there when we want to use it. We can't be running the CDs back and forth.

*Several people around me were discussing whether or not there was a locked cupboard in the computer room and whether there was another place to keep the software.*

Monty: There is always the question about what we need versus what the kids need. We need to think about these computers and the needs of the kids. In my other school the kids used the Macintosh and they never crashed. The teachers there... some wanted the computer in the lab some wanted one in their classroom. They worked it out. There I set up a procedure and showed the kids. (He went on to explain exactly how he had set up computer lessons with his students in his school the previous year.) You don't change the kids but you change what you do.

Lou: Could I suggest that we do the lab thing to begin with and that Sarah keeps the CDs in a secret place in her desk...

Sarah: No!
Lou: No?
Sarah: They have to be there with them.
Lou: Okay. I love having our Macs up here so when they want to write they can do that. Now we will have to accompany them which will be pretty hard but I realize we aren't the only ones in the school.
Mary: We need to give everyone access.
Lou: Exactly.
Mary: Are we agreed that the Macintoshes go into the computer lab?
Sarah: Can we set up a time now to learn where things go and what the procedures are? I think we need to set up a time now.
Mary: Sarah do you want to set a time?
Monty: I am waiting my 5 seconds. (laughter) I have put my name down to be in charge of the computers. (He explained why he wanted to co-ordinate the computer use.)
Mary: Sorry, I assumed that Sarah would do it.
Monty: That is fine. I put my name down because nobody else had. I would like to set up the procedures for the teachers. (He gave several examples of the possible procedures.) I assure you that the kids here are angels compared to my other school. We had problems until we put the procedures in place.
Severeal staff members were talking and joking among themselves.
(Monty continued explaining how he will set up the lab.)
Terri: I have a suggestion. Why don't we put the computers upstairs in the art room. The seniors may use it more. (Laughter and talking) Maybe we don't use it more because we haven't had access. (She explained how this could be done.)
Sarah: I don't have a problem with moving but (laughter) we all need to use it. So whatever.
Naomi: We'd like to use it. There are some neat programs.
Mary: There is not enough wiring in the art room. (Talked about the outlets.)

*There was more discussion about where the computers should go.*

Kim: Just so Sarah doesn’t have to repeat what she said...

Sarah: What I said was I think if everyone wants to use them then we need to have them centrally located.

*One or two people laughed.*

Mary: So the suggestion was made that they go in the lab. Is there anybody who disagrees with that?

*Naomi who was taking notes asked for clarification because she was unsure about what has been decided.*

Naomi: Okay I wrote that down. (Much laughter.) Will we have the procedure meeting? Is that what we are trying to decide right now? Okay.

Mary: When would you like the procedure meeting? Noon hour? After school?

Kirsten: May I suggest we have it at a Thursday staff meeting because we are all here anyway.

Mary: That is a good idea, let’s do it.

Lou: Can I make another suggestion? Maybe it is not a good idea but maybe we could have Monty come in and talk to our kids. Each class would be trained individually.

Mary: He could do that on his free time. (Laughter.) He’s not laughing!

*Conversation continued about the way that suggestion could be implemented.*

Shirla: Asks for clarification about where the computers are now. (Mary explains.)

Mary: How are you feeling about this, Monty?

Monty: I would like to take time to think about it. I am not sure that what we have decided meets our needs. I would like to think about the best way to meet our needs and our students needs. (He goes on to discuss the kinds of computers and their use.) Yes, doing the procedures in the classroom is no
problem but I have to decide myself if I believe that is the best use of what we have. That is what I am sorting out, what I am thinking.

Mary: Reflecting?

Monty: Yes.

*More discussion followed about how to best use the computers.*

Sarah: From past experience I think the computers in the lab works very well. (She discusses programs and their possible use by classes.)

Lynne: Can we agree to leave it for awhile?

Mary: We have made our decisions. Now we are discussing our in-service. Can we leave it up to Monty? You can approach Monty about how to meet your needs for in-service.

Lou: Then the lab versus in class? Then if we get new computers it can be addressed if the need arises? Because that still seems to be a bit of an issue.

Mary: What's an issue?

Lou: The lab versus the classroom.

Mary: That has been decided.

Lou: Yes, for now, but what if we get new computers for example then we could readdress it.

Mary: Yes, but for now we decided to leave it in the lab.

*Naomi asked for clarification for her notes and got different answers. (Laughter)*

Monty: I don’t believe this!

Loud laughter!

Sarah: Can I add to the decision? If you don’t agree I want you to say so. I am thinking we need to agree as a staff that no student no matter how much you trust them will be allowed in the lab without you. If we can’t agree on that we need to do something else. I honestly believe that that is where the problem is. I was as guilty as everybody else. (She explained in great detail her meaning. She restated the questions and gave her supporting reasons
again.)
Lou: I think at the beginning of the year we have to do that to protect what we
have then go to procedures and maybe it could get better.
Naomi: Shall I write that is the way it is until we have our next computer
meeting?
Mary: Sounds good.
Some individuals talked among themselves.
Mary: Shall we write in our reflective journals now?
Mary asked Naomi to read the decisions that were made which she did.
Naomi: We will keep the computer in Gina’s office where it can be locked up.
We will decide the student use of the Mac computer at a later date. We will
move the rest of the computers into the computer lab. We will have a
procedure meeting to be set up with Monty on a teacher basis. No students
will be allowed in the computer lab unsupervised. These decisions have been
put in place until we can readdress them next month.
Monty led a discussion on where and when to move the computers. Staff
volunteered to help.
Mary: I am really conscious of the time. Before we go further I want to say
that I am concerned about personal time. But I have some items here. We
need to make a decision about what we are going to do. Others also have
items they need to discuss.
Discussion followed about how to handle this. They decided to get as far as they
could and do the rest at the mini staff meeting next Thursday. The rest of the
meeting was spent going over information items, such as when fire drills would
take place, and reports from the community coordinator, librarian, and others.
No decisions were made. People were asked to support various undertakings,
such as a Louis Riel assembly. During this time Mary relayed the following:
Mary: I know it is easy to get down this time of year with the behaviour of the
students. If you are having a problem let Monty or I know so we can help.
After a few more information items were quickly presented the meeting was
adjourned at approximately 5:15 p.m.
Appendix C

Staff Meeting
February 6, 1997
Appendix C

Staff Meeting

February 6, 1997

An overview of this meeting is given. It is not an exact transcription. The quotations attributed to each person have been summarized at times for conciseness. The essence of the meeting has been maintained.

The meeting began at 2:30 p.m. after a lunch prepared by two of the staff members. This meeting was held as usual in the LRC. The tables and chairs are arranged in an oval.

Ellen was the designated clerk for this staff meeting. The meeting began with everyone reading the written information items.

The first item was the PD activity. Kim explained her program and how it was designed to meet the needs of her students. Approximately thirty minutes were spent on her presentation and the questions that followed.

During the question period there was some friendly kibitzing.

The staff meeting began with the fourth reflection group’s recommendations being presented.

Ellen: Kim.

Kim: Sheesh! I don’t know if I will remember a lot of this stuff. (Laughter)

Okay, it was school council. You were given a little write-up from the fourth reflection group that had our ideas and suggestions on it.

*People were asking what sheets and were looking through their papers.*

Jayne: This was from a long time ago, not today.

Kim: Oh yes, it was a long time ago. Hopefully you had a chance to look at it. Basically what we came up with is the next step after the reflection group...

We really felt that the staff feels that we need to involve parents and the
community in our decisions in terms of a vision statement and what we value and all of those things. We thought we really shouldn’t be going ahead of the staff and say let’s define, let’s get a committee together to look at how to involve parents. We have a school council that is suppose to be developing or developed. Right? I don’t know what the time frame was but soon, as part of restructuring the whole community school concept. And I don’t know the terminology of what the report calls it...

Mary: That’s fine.

Kim: So we thought that the committee should be working toward that... council formed because they are the people, that includes us of course, who are going to define what is the vision for our school. And that was key to us. That made complete sense to us that we work on the school council concept. In the document about the school council that includes employees, support staff, teachers, outside agencies, parents, you name it. Students, it is to include students as well. We had a brainstorm that we came up with about this. We should have a community function, a dinner, and invite members of the community. We would have a speaker to talk about this school council and how it is to be developed and get some interested people from that function or social to go ahead and go forward and get started, form a group. From reading this my understanding is that any parent who has a student attending our school can belong to the school council but there is an executive that needs to be formed that represents the group. And we are not asking if that’s okay. But can everyone live with going ahead and looking into having a social and getting a speaker, someone who was involved in developing the community document. That was one. And maybe developing a survey as well to feel the community to find out what they see some of the needs are and concerns. Maybe having a little prize for those who return their survey. (She discusses why a prize might be important.) We all do that.
Laughter

Kim: We just want to throw that out and let you think about that. If you can live with it then we’ll get started. If you can’t then you need to say “no.”
PAUSE

Ellen: We have agreed. Please write it down (directed to the person taking notes). Are we going to go ahead and get a group to look into that?

There was some discussion about there already being a group to deal with this.

Kim: Oh that’s right. We have that group written down somewhere.

Terri: Is that the same job?

Kim: Well, it was about the mission statement so it is pretty connected. Do you guys feel okay about that? Who is on it?

Monty reiterated what Kim has presented and talked about the connection between school council and mission statement.

Monty: Once the council is formed it is the council’s baby.

There were some questions about who the speakers would be.

Monty: So I guess there are three decisions that this committee would need to make: how to let the folks know out there, what night it is going to be, and what we are eating for supper. Is there anything else?

Ellen: Who was on this committee?

People said whether they were or weren’t.

Terri: But I am confused. We set the committee, but we’ve already decided what the committee is going to do?

Kim: I think the whole direction of the committee has been relooked at. We aren’t going to have a committee of teachers develop the mission statement. It will have to be a school council so then someone has to say let’s get this school council together and it doesn’t mean you will be on the executive of this school council.

PAUSE
Ellen: Would those who were on the committee like to stay on and see this through or not?

*Some discussion about who would and who would not. Seven volunteered.*

Ellen: Will you read our decisions?

Recorder: Get a speaker who knows about school councils, get a group of people who are willing to work on a school council concept, people who are there will form the council, send out a form, have prizes to encourage the return of the form.

Kim: Maybe we need to take out the part about prizes and let the group decide. How do the rest of you feel?

*Agreed*

Ellen: Mary.

Mary: The fifth reflective group met this morning. Did you get the sheet that Jayne handed out? I liked the way you outlined it, Jayne. Here are the reflections we had, the dialogue. It shows you what we came up with. In discussing how to continue using DH... We talked about the advantages of having the information items written at the beginning of the staff meeting; the PD portion is the time to discuss important issues. We felt that many of us already use many of the elements of DH. When we have a small group it is easy to take turns and listen to everyone and make sure that everybody speaks. So this morning we found ourselves being cautious and thinking about what someone said before jumping in. Although some people have commented that staff meetings don't seem to be fun, staff meetings in the past have not always been fun. Are we being a bit nostalgic? We felt that before DH we didn't always get things done in staff meetings. So we are thinking we like to propose that morning times are for socials (we have done that already) and on staff meeting days we would ask people to be here at 2:15 to have 15 minutes as a socializing time. The proposals are the 2:15
time. (She talked about how that could be done.) DH will be used for major
decisions, the small issues will be listed as information and if someone wants
to dialogue about the small issue they will have the opportunity to say so.
The leader of the dialogue needs to limit the amount people speak. (How this
might be done was outlined.) The leader will be selective about calling on those
to speak so that many people will have the opportunity of speaking. (She
elaborated on this point.) We think that reflective groups can still be used.
They will be formed if many people are bringing multiple ideas and no
consensus is being reached. (She elaborated.) We will form a reflective group
when there is a decision that someone can not live with. (She elaborated.)
People can volunteer to be on it. A reminder, the reflective group
recommendations will be tried unless someone can not live with and support
the decisions. (She elaborated.) The last question... Who will be responsible
for updating new members of the staff about DH. We thought we would set
up a mentoring system. (She explained how this would be handled.)

PAUSE

Ellen: Is there anyone who can not live with these proposals?

Monty: I don’t know if this is the appropriate time to mention this but we are
going to be doing our planning document soon. I think if we are going to
continue DH it needs to be part of our planning document. That document
helps a new administrator know where the school has been and where it is
headed to.

Mary talked about how the mentoring system would help with that same
process.

Ellen: Is this an extra decision that Monty has just made about the planning
document?

PAUSE

Ellen: Would you like to make that decision?
PAUSE

Ellen: So Recorder, we decided to accept the reflective group's recommendations and Monty's idea about the planning document.

*Recorder clarified what he was to write.*

The meeting was turned over to Mary. She asked if anyone needed to dialogue about the information items. The rest of the meeting was composed of announcements that needed some elaboration, such as sweetheart and Cupid week, up-coming in-service, and a play day. During this part of the meeting there was laughter and kibitzing. The information about play day engendered thoughts about how the day could be handled differently.

Sarah: (Presented the plans for the winter play day in great detail.) It is an all day activity. One thing that was a concern was that in the last session the kids were just dragging because they had been really active all day. If we did it in a half day, it might be better. (She explained how that would be done.)

Ellen: Lynne.

Lynne: Then it makes sense to me to do the outside activities first and then do the hot chocolate and then lunch and then let them go after lunch.

Ellen: Kirsten.

Kirsten: Mary, would it be possible if we had a hot dog lunch and then dismissed them after that?

Mary: I don't think we could do that unless it was a staff meeting day.

Ellen: Dana.

Dana: I think the reason we had outside and inside activities was because some of the smaller kids got cold.

Terri: I think it is a good idea to have it a half day.

Ellen: Okay, is there anyone who can't live with having it for a half day?

Ellen: Nan?

Nan: I just have one concern. That weekend I am going away and I was
honing to leave early on Thursday. I am keen to be involved. So I don’t want it to be prolonged.

Sarah: What would we be looking at, Mary?

Mary: A regular day.

Ellen: I think we are all in agreement. I have already talked to Mary about my class not being involved. Last year there was a few tears. How does everyone feel about the half day?

PAUSE

Ellen: Mary.

Mary: I think we need to send it to the committee to plan the day.

Everyone shouts: “Half day!”

Ellen: Monty.

Monty: I need to make some changes about where the computers are for the next several weeks because I am running an in-service. (He explained why he needed the change and what he would be asking the teachers to do.)

Sarah: We have our grades on the computer. How are these going to be kept from parents using the computers?

Monty: They won’t have access.

Sarah: There was nothing on before.

Monty: I have now.

Sarah: You can put one on retroactively?

Monty: Yes.

Sarah: Okay.

Monty explained how he could do this.

Ellen: Rosebud.

Rosebud: We need to label those computers because I had students get really frustrated when they couldn’t get into some of the computers.

Ellen: Kim.
Kim: Couldn’t we have programs in there that the kids could do without getting into the other stuff?
Monty: We have the technology. But several months ago we agreed to have a computer just for teachers. But yes it is possible.
Nan: Isn’t it expense to have a computer that is restricted to just the use of teachers?
Monty: Yes.
Lynne: If you are willing, are we willing to revisit that. Might it not be accessible to students?
Ellen: Do you want to discuss that now?
Monty: Can we discuss my request first?
Ellen: Is there anyone who can’t live with Monty’s request?
A joking comment was made and laughter ensued.
Ellen: Did we make Monty’s decision? Yes. Okay, we are discussing students...
Lou: There is someone here who can’t live with that decision:
Sarah: I don’t think there is a problem. I am envisioning if we set the computer up there and put programs on it I know that is a different decision. But I don’t know how many times I have gone up and there have been other teachers on it. I don’t want to be in competition with the kids as well. The times I want to use it I want to go in use it and go. I don’t want to be farting around worrying about switches that have been turned off or things that have been touched on the computer. I want that computer ready to go. I think when we put it in the lab and allow accessibility to kids that we may run into trouble. (She elaborated on the trouble she foresaw.) I could live with it being in the resource room and then you could wheel it back when you need it.
But not in the computer lab.
Ellen: Is there another idea about the computer?
Monty: In theory there should not be a problem because there should always be an adult in the computer lab.

Sarah: Even if you are there things happen.

*Suggestions were made about covers and switches to help solve the problem.*

Lou: I suggest so that we can accommodate everyone that we put it in the resource room.

Ellen: Is there anyone who can't live with it in the resource room?

**PAUSE**

Rosebud: I don't want to disturb the resource teachers. I really work on it a lot.

*Some questions were asked about switching on and off the computer.*

Nan: In answer to Rosebud, you won't bother me.

Ellen: Then we are agreed? Yes.

*The meeting continued with other information items, such as the LRC report and socials. Ellen had the recorder read the decision made about the computer to make sure everyone knew what he wrote down.*

Naomi: There seems to be a lot of fighting going on. I am wondering if we couldn't resurrect the mediators.

Lou: We still have a few kids trained from last year but I am wondering if we still want it since we don't have recesses any more. Last year when recesses were stopped the kids felt like they didn't have anything to do. So it kind of dwindled off. (She was asked to explain what the program was which she did.) We also started to question whether this fits Quality School and Choice Theory. It doesn't really. It is an excellent program. (She continued to discuss why it is a good program.) It worked for little things. How do other people feel about it.

Mary: The big kids learn good things too like body language. The process does fit what we do but some of the questions don't fit in.
Mary and Lou discussed how this program could be implemented.

Terri: Could we bring elements of restitution into it?

Lou: Well, it talks about what the problem was a lot. Choice Theory, let's figure out how to fix things. They talk about feelings. Choice Theory, let's get on with things. Yeah, restitution is the ultimate goal.

Jayne: Part of that is each one talks about what they need and that goes along with restitution really well. What do you need?

Lou: Yeah. We could change it. Instead of how do you feel, what do you need? We could modify it.

Lou: Dana, did you find... use it much last year?

Dana: No, not last year. I was on leave. But before we did.

Monty: How many kids would be needed.

Lou: Only one or two.

Lou explained the procedure for asking for a mediator.

Lou: It would only take five or ten minutes.

Monty talked about not wanting kids out of his classroom too often. He suggested a time that the students could leave without causing too much interruption.

Ellen: Can everyone live with having mediation and having it only right after lunch?

PAUSE

Madeline: I suggest that we try it and discuss it at our next staff meeting if we need to.

Everyone agreed.

Ellen: Now if you will all spend a few minutes writing in your journals before you go.

The meeting ended at approximately 4:30 p.m.
Appendix D

Journal Reflections
September 5
Appendix D

Journal Reflections

September 5

These are the first journal reflections written after the staff meeting on September 5 by all the staff members who attended the meeting. Some entries have been modified for conciseness and some comments have been omitted due to their private nature and lack of direct significance to the study.

Mary's journal:

9/22 Mary described a situation where discussion had broken down into a power and control battle in a meeting that she did not attend. I was asked to intervene and I suggested using DH. It worked well for them and the differences were resolved. I feel that the team spirit was reestablished. As well, I was quite upset about decisions taking so long at the last staff meeting. That was on the 4th. Now on the 22nd I feel that while one person dominated the meeting, I am able to understand that person's motivation. I feel we learned from that meeting and won't let it happen again. I also respect differences and respect the choices others make.

Monty's journal:

9/6 I found the staff meeting extremely frustrating. I am wondering why I feel angry. Are people talking too fast? I feel they are making decisions without thinking about the kids. I feel I may have to interrupt or count faster.

Rosebud's journal:

9/26 I noticed the effects of DH in the Control Theory meeting. Everyone was reflecting before speaking. I felt that it was wonderful. The sharing staff meeting yesterday was different but I saw some evidence of reflecting. I will suggest that we remind people about DH before a meeting begins.
Ellen’s journal:
9/24 I like Monty’s’ suggestion that the staff stay focused on what is good for the students. I am reflecting on many personal issues as a result of the Control Theory weekend.

Dana’s journal:
9/23 I am very concerned about the time DH is taking. But I found the Control Theory weekend very useful. I believe that we will listen to and understand each other better. I think that we bonded as a staff.

Terri’s journal:
9/22 I had a tough time with my intern when a lesson went badly. He felt the supervisor and I were picking on him rather than helping him solve his problem. That made me think about the way I solve problems. I wonder if I dwell on the problem rather than looking for a solution. I feel this ties into DH and restitution. It is all linked to communication and keeping in mind the big picture. “What do I really want? What is going to make me be the best teacher/person?” My goal is to keep the big picture in mind.

Celeste’s journal:
9/5 Time spent on the computers is ridiculous.

Madeline’s journal:
9/23 I feel that attending the Control Theory workshop was worthwhile and was an excellent opportunity to get to know other staff members better. I am learning about being a risk-taker. I think the ideas from the weekend made me realize the needs that we all have. I think that everyone needs power and control. I believe that people’s need for love and belonging are being met in DH. Encouraging everyone to speak fosters an attitude of belonging and enables them to have power and control. I plan to use the things I learned on the weekend with my students.
Lynne’s journal:
9/26 I am overwhelmed. I feel that we are talking in circles and repeating ourselves.

Kirsten’s journal:
9/26 I am feeling overwhelmed by all the new things I need to know and do. At first I was using DH in the classroom and I felt the students were happier and they feel an important part of the group. The feeling of acceptance of any viewpoint is there. I know some Quakers and am impressed by their approach to life. I found DH too long at the first staff meeting. Now DH isn’t working well in classroom. But I am continuing to work with it because I like it and feel it calms discussion. I feel people are stopping to think about how they should say things. I was in the first reflection group and I liked the way DH worked there. I think DH should have been introduced in small groups then the large group.

Summer’s journal:
9/5 It seems everyone is trying to remember the 5 sec. rule but it is not working.

Sarah’s journal:
9/26 I will have trouble being quiet because no one else can say it as well as I can.

Lou’s journal:
9/24 My big concerns are time and lack of humour. I am making an effort to use the 5 second reflecting time in other places than just staff meeting. I am working on really listening to other people.

Kalther’s journal:
9/23 I feel that Aboriginal people are being marginalized by their very means of communicating being appropriated from them by a non-aboriginal person. I had a discussion with another teacher about DH when I made this same
comment in the office. The teacher said that she feels that I am angry. I told
her that I offer a counter conscience. I think that DH allows respect back
into the discussion arena. I believe that DH can allow for respectful rebuttal.

Nan's journal:
9/26 I feel that the Control Theory weekend was a great idea. It built rapport.
I am wondering how to get non-participants to take part in the discussion.

Shirla's journal:
9/23 I like this process and feel that it will encourage collaboration. I feel
strength and solidarity with the group. I feel that the staff is improving with
their DH skills. I have made great strides in learning the elements of DH.

Kim's journal:
9/23 I enjoyed the Control Theory weekend. I believe that the staff
understand each other better and experienced unconditional acceptance.

Sharon's journal:
9/26 I was part of the first reflective meeting. I was surprised by how many
in the meeting felt as I do about many issues. I feel sure that the staff will try
to improve their skills. I feel meetings are often a waste of time and
frustrating. A shorter but productive meeting felt wonderful.

Gina's journal:
9/24 I had a wonderful experience at the Control Theory weekend. I feel more
in touch with my needs. I saw trust and honesty exhibited by the staff. It
helped me understand others and their basic needs.
Appendix E

Journal Reflections
February 6
Appendix E

Journal Reflections

February 6

These are the first journal reflections written after the staff meeting on February 6 by all the staff members who attended the meeting. Some entries have been modified for conciseness and some comments have been omitted due to their private nature and lack of direct significance to the study.

Mary’s journal:
2/6 Things went well, but I am almost paranoid to hear what other people think. This was a relaxing staff meeting. I think that people felt okay... boy did we get through a lot and make a lot of decisions! I did think that there was no one who dominated and that was good.

Monty’s journal:
2/6 Good meeting. I am very tired. I have a cold and did not get much sleep. This is affecting my disposition, it is hard to be nice when you feel miserable. Maybe others are miserable because they are tired and sick. It is nice not to have to move the computers up and down the stairs. I think mediations is a great idea but I have had a frustrating week trying to teach. I have kids leaving the classroom for hours every day (Heritage club, ukulele, party, community asso., preschool, office). It has been difficult to teach with these interruptions.

Rosebud’s journal:
2/6 Well, I am really happy about how the meeting went! Everyone seemed to get a say in issues that interested them. A great deal of information was shared and many decisions made. With everyone being so busy, this seems like a wonderful way to accomplish things, while everyone has input. Again, I
think we’re back into routine (last month we weren’t) and the weather is warmer! These things do affect people. Ellen did a great job!

**Ellen’s journal:**

2/6 Staff seemed very relaxed. Topics may not have been controversial so my job was easy. Perhaps DH is becoming a more natural process now. I feel very good about it. Some of the discussion wasn’t controlled but it was okay.

**Dana’s journal:**

2/6 I felt the meeting was productive. Ellen kept people on track. Everyone was on topic and we were done on time. We made good decisions and a lot of people participated.

**Celeste’s journal:**

2/6 It’s been busy week. Staff meeting moved along fairly well. Ellen kept the meeting moving fairly smoothly. A little bogged down with the placement of computer. Overall a pretty good staff meeting.

**Madeline’s journal:**

2/6 The meeting went very smoothly. Ellen is very effective as a leader and the recorder was a good note keeper. I dread that job! We continue to be respectful of the time we take to speak and what we are going to talk about. The computer discussion went quickly because we assessed the needs of teachers - and came to an agreement that would effectively meet our needs.

**Lynne’s journal:**

2/6 Today’s meeting was excellent! I felt that it was well run. Ellen was an excellent leader and people were succinct. Lots was decided. I can see how a leader can influence how DH flows.

**Kirsten’s journal:**

2/6 I thought this meeting went very well. The process is working more like I thought it would - my quality world perhaps. Ellen did a great job leading the meeting - everyone seemed to be in pretty good spirits.
Sarah’s journal:
2/6 Well, I think this meeting went much better than the previous ones. I think as I have stated numerous times before, that the key is the role of the leader. The leader needs to be willing to draw things to a close. We made a lot of decisions in a short period of time - that’s great. I’m not sure if it is working better as well because we are letting it work - are we becoming more comfortable with wait time and not restating ideas?

Lou’s journal:
2/6 I think the staff meeting went quite well. I didn’t feel frustrated at the end like I have in the past. Maybe we have perfected DH to suit our needs! I hope so!

Nan’s journal:
2/6 Excellent reflective meeting this AM. I am very impressed by how much more effective collaborative planning is. I’m learning so much from the others.

Kim’s journal:
2/7 Well, I thought the meeting went fairly smoothly. Perhaps decisions were made very quickly but I hope people would speak up if they had a problem with a decision. I hope I didn’t over use humour. I think some people need it and hopefully all can respect that. I read your paper. I didn’t realize the extent to which DH was used in some classes. That’s interesting to look at as well as the implications of the staff using it on the rest of the school.

Sharon’s journal:
2/6 The meeting moved well. Decisions were made as necessary. Pleasant meeting, a little slow in a few spots but very tolerable as we move through the DH process a little more on our own each time.

Gina’s journal:
2/6 Good meeting today. Felt that the meeting went really well - well run.
Ellen did a great job. Lots of issues were resolved - lots were information ones but still they were settled. Good feeling in the air - very relaxed.

Red's journal:

2/6 I am anxious to have the staff meeting start earlier since I have to leave about 3:00. I like the information sheet. Maybe it could be sent in the morning -- helping the meeting to start earlier. I am excited about the school council. I hope we -- the staff-- and the community will attend the planning -- inaugural event. I like the ideas proposed by the reflection groups on how to implement and continue DH. I think we need to remember that decisions need to be implemented and part of a decision is necessarily a clear plan to implement that decision.
Appendix F

Reflective Groups:
Membership, Agendas, Recommendations
Appendix F

Reflective Groups:

Membership, Agendas, Recommendations

First Reflective Group held on September 23.
The members were Summer, Kirsten, Lynne, Sharon, Terri, Jayne.

The agenda was:

1) Do we need to level decision making?
   Some questions do not need to be addressed by the whole staff?

2) How do we improve our listening skills?
   Encourage quiet people to speak?
   Value different view points?

3) What do we do when it is obvious that we are talking in circles?
   Who steps in?
   What should the role of leadership be?

4) Should we share leadership of meetings as we share recorder?

5) Other?

Recommendations were:

(1) There should be a leader in each staff meeting.

(2) The leader should give guidance to the meeting and help us stay on task.

(3) When the leader sees that we are facing a contentious issue which cannot be resolved in a timely manner, the leader stops the process and asks for all interested parties (who wish to be involved in the decision) to meet at a later time. (This meeting could take place at the end of the staff meeting or at another time.)

(4) Mary or Monty should be the leaders because they have access to the larger picture. The one most removed from the issue should be the one to lead the dialogue.

Because counting to 5 did not seem to be effective in encouraging reflection,
we offered these suggestions for improving listening skills:

(1) The leader reviews the components of DH at the beginning of each meeting.
(2) Each person reviews what the last speaker has said before speaking.
(3) Closing your eyes while reflecting could be helpful.
(4) Take a deep breath before speaking.
(5) Write down your ideas or questions as others are speaking. Then, when your points have been made or questions asked by someone else, cross them off. Only make the points or ask the questions that have not be addressed.

Second Reflective Group on October 17.
The members were Gina, Nan, Shirla, Mary, Rosebud, and Jayne.
The agenda was:
(1) How does someone signal that they wish dialogue when no dialogue is invited? Is there a way to deal with issues that are information only so that there is more time for discussing issues of concern?
(2) How should leadership at meetings be handled?
(3) 31% of the people responding to the Deal survey felt that involvement was either a 3 or 4. I am wondering why. Any ideas?
(4) Other

The recommendations were:

Effective use of time in staff meetings:
1. Ways for communicating information items.
   a. memos (ex. memos given out at the beginning of staff meeting with 10 minutes of reading/reflecting time) b. use of mailboxes c. reserve the dynamic/flexible aspect of Inkonze
2. Way(s) to signal a desire for dialogue on a topic that is seen to be informational only.
3. Plant seeds
4. Reserve the dynamic/flexible aspect of Inkonze.
Third Reflective Group was held on November 25.
The members were Madeline, Ellen, Lou, Dana, Sarah, and Jayne.
The agenda was:
1. How to ensure the fun factor is included in our staff meetings?
2. Ideas for improving communication between families.
3. What is the job of the reflection group? The question being raised is should the reflection group be a decision making body or is it a brainstorming suggestion giving body?

Recommendations were:
I. (1) Encourage everyone to meet each morning at 8:55 in the staff room.
    - This will give us time to get to know each other better.
    - We will have the opportunity to discuss needs and share laughs.
(2) Person on kitchen clean-up is encouraged to bring a small snack one morning a week.
(2) Have a built-in less formal time in the staff meeting, for example, PD last month (small group and sharing ideas time).
    - Fun does not always mean laughing.
    - We are all getting more comfortable with DH and are less intimidated now.
    - Written items in staff meeting frees up time for more relaxed dialogue.
    - Our aim is to find a balance for business and fun.
II. The second issue we addressed was finding ideas for improving communication between families.
Suggestions: We believe that meeting each morning will take care of the problem. More formal solutions such as a white board for communication needs might be instituted if the daily meetings does not solve the problem.
III. The third issue was defining the job of the reflection group. The question being raised is should the reflection group be a decision making body or is it a
brainstorming suggestion giving body?

Suggestions: (1) The group believes that the reflection group is a brainstorming, suggestion group but encourages trying the ideas that the group brings before other suggestions are presented.

- to keep from discussing issues unnecessarily and to save time

(2) Give the background for each suggestion summarizing the discussion.

- if the reasons for the suggestions are presented then many concerns will be eliminated

(3) Staff should still be given an opportunity to say they can or cannot live with the suggestion.

Fourth Reflective Group was held on January 14.

The members were Brown, Red, Monty, Celeste, Kim, and Jayne

The agenda was:

The issues which need to be addressed are the involvement of parents in Inkonze, and what we value.

Thoughts and recommendations were:

1. We can't make the assumption that all parents wish to be involved in the management of Inkonze.

2. Someone needs to sell the parents on the idea of being involved.

3. The parent council needs to be involved.

4. Teachers need to be involved with the parent council not just the administrators.

5. A community school must have a school council which involves employees, parents, and the community. There is money provided for the school council.

6. The timeline is short.

7. This group would be a focus/decision making group and our vision should come from them.
8. There should be student reps from all classes.
9. The community association should be combined with the school council.
10. The school council will provide a way to make problems school problems rather than teacher problems and give everyone responsibility.
11. Parental involvement might require in-service.
12. We need to work as a team.

The next step: 1. Have a dinner and invite the community. Have a speaker (expert) explain the concept of a community school council.
2. Develop a group of people who are willing to work on a school council concept from those who attend the meeting.
3. Survey the community and use an incentive for encouraging the return of the form (draw/prize).

**Fifth Reflective Group was held on February 6.**

The members were Lynne, Mary, Rosebud, Ellen, Nan, Jayne

**The agenda was:**

1. How do we decide when to use or not use DH?
2. What do we need to have in place so that DH can continue in a beneficial fashion?
3. Do we need to continue with reflective groups? If so, how are they struck and who participates?
4. Who will be responsible for updating new members of the staff about DH?

**Thoughts and recommendations were:**

In deciding when to use DH some of the ideas dialogued about were:

- The role of the administration in providing leadership.
- The importance of administration understanding DH.
- The advantages of having written information items at the beginning of the staff meeting.
• The PD portion of the meeting could be the time to discuss important (large) issues.

• DH should be the process used at monthly staff meetings.

• We already use the basic tenets of DH in small meetings.

• Staff meetings in the past were not always fun - we are being a bit nostalgic about them; selective memory?!

• Staff meetings before DH did not necessarily produce decisions. We were so busy having laughs that we forgot to get our business done.

• The morning time (8:55), socials, and 2:15-2:30 (staff meeting days) are the times for socializing and having laughs.

• People should have the opportunity to dialogue in reflective meetings about issues that are importance to them.

• People new to the school need to know many things about the school - DH is one of those things.

The decisions we purpose are:

1. At staff meetings use the time between 2:15 and 2:30 for visiting and socializing.

2. DH will be used for major decisions. The small decisions will be listed as information (on sheet given for reading) and if a staff member wishes to dialogue about one they will have the opportunity to say so.

3. The leader of the dialogue needs to limit the amount people speak.
   - They will do so by signalling (each leader to decide how this is done) to someone that they are speaking too long or are off topic.
   - The leader will be selective in calling on those wishing to speak so that many people will have the opportunity to speak.

4. Reflective groups will be formed:
   - If there are many people bringing multiple ideas and no consensus is being reached.
When there is a decision that someone cannot “live with and support.”

At the time the issue is raised - membership and chair are voluntary.

5. A reminder - The reflective group's recommendations will be tried unless someone cannot live with and support them.

6. A mentoring system will be set up so that new members will have someone to help them understand the culture of Inkonze (For example, what is Quality Schools, Choice Theory, DH?) A list will be drawn up and posted of those who are willing to mentor someone new to the staff. The people new to the school will be given a copy so that they know who is available to answer their questions.
Appendix G

Research Activities
Appendix G
Research Activities

1. Monthly Staff meetings - From August 22 to February 6 there were seven staff meetings. (There were two staff meetings at the beginning of the year.) Each meeting was tape recorded.

2. Reflective Journals - Each participant was asked to write in their journal weekly. When the journals were given to me, I recorded their comments.

3. Professional Development (PD) - There were PD activities incorporated in most staff meetings as well as a half day devoted to PD issues during the community school retreat in October. These activities were tape recorded as well.

4. Reflective Groups - There were five reflective groups. I requested that each person be involved in at least one reflective group. These meetings were tape recorded. All but two people accommodated this request. The teacher whose baby arrived early and the intern were unable to be a part of one of these groups.

5. Individual Interviews - When possible, each person was interviewed three times. The first interviews took place from August 30 to September 9. The second interviews were from November 1 to 25. The third interviews were held from January 27 to February 6. Each of these interviews were tape recorded. The teacher whose baby arrived early was interviewed once. The intern and a teacher on a temporary contract were interviewed twice.

6. Weekly Notes - Each week I placed blank note papers in each staff member's mailbox so that she/he could write comments or questions to me anonymously. Sometimes I used these quotations in letters to staff and on the bulletin board.

7. Bulletin Board - I placed a DH bulletin board in the staff room. On this board I placed the tree metaphor and quotations that the staff had shared
with me. These quotations were changed weekly.

8. Professional Material - I placed informational items concerning dialogue, building community, and decision making gleaned from the literature on the staff room table for the staff to read when they wished.

9. Threshing Session - Once in January the staff held a "threshing session" during a staff meeting. This sessions was designed to encourage dialogue about contentious issues and was not intended to result in decision making.

10. Letters to Staff - I wrote seven letters to the staff. These letters were used to share quotations from the staff, impart information on the study, ask questions, raise concerns, or encourage the staff when we were experiencing difficult times.
Appendix H

Chronological Order of the Research Activities
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Chronological Order of the Research Activities

1. Staff Meeting August 23 and 23.
2. Staff Meeting September 5.
3. First Individual Interviews August 30 to September 9.
4. First Reflective Group September 23.
5. Staff Meeting October 3.
6. Retreat Staff Meeting October 24.
7. Second Reflective Group October 17.
8. Staff Meeting November 7.
11. Staff Meeting December 5.
12. Threshing Session December 12.
13. Staff Meeting January 8.
15. Third Individual Interviews January 27 to February 6.
17. Staff Meeting February 6.
Appendix I

Ethical Guidelines
Appendix I

Ethical Guidelines

Study Title: Dynamic Harmonization in a School Restructuring Endeavour

Researcher: Jayne Hudson, Doctoral Student, University of Saskatchewan
Ph. 966-7018

Advisor: Dr. L. Sackney, University of Saskatchewan Ph. 966-7626

The use of dynamic harmonization will be introduced to a school staff and together we will explore the usefulness of this concept in the world of teaching. The purpose of this study will be to ascertain the usefulness of dynamic harmonization as a process for implementing a second-order change endeavour in a school setting. Ethical guidelines will be observed throughout the study in order to safeguard the interests of each participant:

1. Participants will be informed as to the purpose and the nature of the study.
2. Participants will participate voluntarily and will be free to withdraw at anytime if they so wish.
3. Each participant will have the opportunity to review the researcher's summary and interpretation of the information collected from the participant in order to determine the accuracy of the researcher's reporting and interpretation. Changes will be made as deemed to be appropriate by the participant.
4. To guarantee anonymity of the site and of the participants, pseudonyms will be used in any references to the data collected from this study.
5. The information collected during the study will be used for academic purposes only, and confidentiality of the data will be maintained with respect to all other purposes.
6. Only the researcher, her advisors, and pertinent participants will have access to the data on the tape recordings, transcripts of tapes, journals, and
observational field notes generated during the study. "Pertinent participants" means that individuals will have access upon request to the data they have personally provided, but not to data provided by other individuals, unless they were present at the time the data were generated.

As a participant in Jayne Hudson's study, I acknowledge that I have been fully informed of these guidelines and that I have agreed to participate in this study under these conditions.

Participant:__________________________________________

Researcher:__________________________________________

Witness:______________________________________________

Date:_________________________________________________