

Factors Affecting the Engagement of Experienced Teachers in Schools

by

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Candidate's Declaration

I certify that the thesis entitled **'Factors Affecting the Engagement of Experienced Teachers in Schools'** submitted for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy is the result of my own work and that where reference is made to the work of others, due acknowledgment is given.

I also certify that any material in the thesis which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by any university or institution is identified in the text.

Full Name.....

Signed

Date.....

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Summary

With the changing age profile of teachers in Australian schools, considerable numbers of experienced teachers need to feature as educational leaders, before their workplace knowledge and expertise will be lost to schools with retirement. Stereotypes of veteran teachers depict individuals, wearied by decades of work experiences, entering professional decline when educational systems need these experienced practitioners to remain connected, communicative and motivated in their work.

This thesis explores the careers and contemporary professional lives of experienced practitioners — predominantly classroom teachers — currently working in a school with a long standing commitment to student-centred education. The research identified the factors that influenced their career pathways and affected their engagement with their work. Critical incidents in the teachers' careers and professional lives are discussed in relation to the theories of motivation and the nature of Professional Learning Communities. The study showed that necessary factors for engagement were: mutual alignment with a well-articulated and practised ethos; supportive leadership; experiencing professional influence; opportunities for learning; and variety in work. Disillusion resulted if school actions were contrary to the espoused ethos. Severely negative experiences of performance management were survived by withdrawing, and enduring management tenures but these remain very poignant memories. The teachers had few career regrets yet reflection revealed the arbitrary nature of their career progression.

The research identified a need to recognise the global and societal factors influencing the nature of teachers' work. It is argued that schools and systems need to have a greater alignment between these external forces and their internal goals whilst recapturing the moral purpose of education. Furthermore, it is asserted that educational systems need to provide better human resource management for the teaching workforce through emphasising life-balance and well-being. Additionally, professional appraisal and staff management would benefit from strong recognition and deployment of the workplace knowledge and expertise of experienced teachers. A serendipitous outcome of the

research was the benefit participants gained from reflecting on their careers which proved extremely affirming, and contributed to enhanced professional identities and changed career plans.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Statement of the Problem

As the age profile of the Australian population changes, experienced and late-career teachers emerge as a predominant cohort of the teaching workforce in schools (MCEETYA, 2005, p. 10). A skilled and significant proportion of the teaching force, experienced teachers need to remain actively engaged in their schools and should be used as leaders within the educational system. There is an immediate need for schools to address the management of experienced teachers to maximise the benefits that can be drawn from their considerable knowledge and expertise as practitioners and educators. The near future will see the retirement of these teachers and a subsequent loss of their workplace experience and expertise from schools. Experienced teachers have the potential to facilitate the realisation of planned educational change and also play a key role in the skilling and development of the teaching force of the future. The realisation of this potential is dependent on supportive structures in schools and the determination of the nature of teachers' work.

1.2 Discussion of the Problem

The initial identification of the problem has been drawn from my perceptions and experiences working in South Australian schools. As an experienced secondary school teacher of 28 years, I have become concerned about the changing nature of my work and work context and the effect that this is having on my job satisfaction. A significant number of the teachers with whom I work are experienced educators who have been teaching for at least twenty years and are still predominantly classroom teachers. Although most still have the enthusiasm for working with young people and are generally keen to be involved in improving the educational outcomes for students, they are also concerned about aspects of their work. These experienced colleagues generally feel confident and successful in their classrooms but often express frustration that other stakeholders in the system have little appreciation for their expertise or the challenges

they face in their work.

Rapidly changing school environments are contributing to the intensification of teachers' work. Austin, Shah, and Muncer (2005) state that teachers are suffering from 'role overload' (p. 74) with unrealistic demands being made on their time and energy and, in fact, the teachers themselves sometimes seem to pay little heed to their own needs and personal welfare. New educational developments are continuously being presented to schools with teachers perceiving these developments to be imposed with no consultation in planning and implementation, causing them to feel powerless and professionally devalued (Rozenholtz, 1989; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 66; Hatch, 2000, p. 4; Fullan, 2001, p.22; Reeves 2006).

Teachers are becoming increasingly aware that they cannot or do not wish to continue the way they are working. Some such teachers are retreating to their classrooms in a defensive response to the dissatisfactions they are experiencing (Hargreaves 1995; Dinham, 1996; Kyriacou, 2001). By isolating themselves professionally, the school loses access to the practitioners' experience and expertise that could inform and ultimately facilitate the implementation of effective educational change. If the system is to retain these skilled educators and purposefully engage them in the future development of our schools, experienced teachers must be assisted in making their chosen profession more manageable and rewarding. Their working context must provide opportunities for them to remain positively connected and communicative within the school community.

Simultaneously with the teachers' experiences of dissatisfaction, policy makers and management are frustrated by older teachers' apparent resistance to change and they feel that planned initiatives fail at the classroom door because of the teachers' opposition or complacency, yet, recent research rejects this as a teacher problem but rather attributes it to the cultures in schools (Fullan, 2001, p.37; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Nevertheless, if experienced teachers are considered less enthusiastic than younger teachers in adopting new developments for schools, the high proportion of late-career teachers in the teaching force will pose a significant barrier to future educational change for as long as the current culture pervades (Dinham, 1996).

Towards the end of the twentieth century there was increased interest in the possible career stages of teachers in an effort to predict the implications for education as the majority of the work force became late-career teachers. In 1990 the Schools Council of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training prepared a report entitled *'Australia's Teachers: An Agenda for the Next Decade'* (Schools Council, 1990). This report presented a stereotype characterising older teachers. This stereotype had the potential to influence the management of late-career teachers in schools. Based upon the literature about teaching career progression, predominantly the earlier work of Huberman (1993), the report identifies seven broad patterns in perceptions of the ways many teachers respond to their work, and these have some correspondence to age and experience.

Career Entry: Sharp learning curve and initial enthusiasm.

Stabilisation: Growing confidence and assertion of independence.

Diversification and Change: Desire to experiment and an increasing focus on the institution and the system

Stock-taking: Questioning career choice with feelings of being trapped in an arduous cycle of activity.

Serenity: Keeping your distance with increased certainty.

Conservatism: Things aren't like they used to be.

Disengagement: Golf and garden are given priority.

(Schools Council, 1990, p.104–108)

The report suggested that empirical evidence supports the existence of these motifs for many teachers and recommended that this information would be valuable in the management and development of human resources in schooling and, finally, the authors invited the reader to judge the veracity of these phases (p. 105).

What is particularly concerning about this national report is that the latter three or even

four stages in this framework depict teachers as withdrawing or disengaging from their work, based on little verification from Australian schools. Perpetuating such a stereotype of professional decline with age, adversely affects the perceived status and value of experienced teachers and such perceptions could become self-fulfilling prophecies (Olsen & Kirtland, 2002). Being respected and valued as contributors is important to empower teachers and unless colleagues and school leaders respect and value their contributions and what they bring to their practice, ‘their innovation would not flourish — it would wither and become ordinary’ (Cumming & Owen, 2001, p.19).

Olsen and Kirtland (2002) found that such negative perceptions often affected the rewards and opportunities afforded to late-career teachers. Howse (1991) suggested that opportunities, such as participation in decision making, enhance job satisfaction and are an effective retraining tool, preventing or retarding obsolescence in ageing teachers. He claimed that the growing concentration of older teachers had been neglected and that ‘the educational, personal and personnel implications of increased numbers with more than twenty years teaching experience require(d) further study’ (p. 166).

The aforementioned Schools Council report warned that career evolution is a process and that individuals may respond in different ways, varying according to gender, school context, domestic, political, social and economical circumstances. My research identifies some of the circumstances that may account for variation from the School Council’s stages, rejecting the implied acceptance of the inevitable decline of the ageing educator, in the interest of the individual and the educational system.

For the improved effectiveness of schools as well as the promise of long and rewarding careers for an ageing teaching force, it is important to review the complex working context of experienced teachers in order to identify the factors that will engage and motivate teachers as educators and leaders for the future, ensuring their retention and wellbeing. A more comprehensive understanding of the nature of teacher’s work and the local, national and international forces affecting that work is needed. Furthermore, it is important to identify how these global forces are lived out personally and professionally by teachers at a local level. Such knowledge can inform the creation of a work environment that encourages experienced teachers to remain engaged, feeling that their

opinions are valued and considered and seeing themselves as lifelong learners in a system that values them as educational leaders. Such a work environment would encourage them to continue their careers productively, enabling the transmission of their considerable workplace knowledge to young teachers.

1.3 Research Questions

There is a need to explore the nature and the context of the work of experienced teachers and to gain their perspectives of their career development and their engagement with their work. In this research teachers were encouraged to critically identify the factors and conditions that had defined and influenced their career evolution. A critical orientation was adopted so that the participants could gain some emancipatory knowledge by reflecting on their past experiences in historical and social contexts. They told and interrogated their professional histories in order to explore the influences and experiences that forged their professional identities, determined the nature of their work and affected their engagement with their schools. During three private interviews, one focussing on their past, one their present experiences and the last their future intentions, each participant shared significant professional and personal stories with the researcher. These were audio-taped, transcribed and analysed. The researcher held a hierarchal position in the generation of theory from the data but ensured that the participants recognised and accepted the theory that emerged from the analysis.

One focus of the research was to identify the factors determining the career progression of the participating experienced teachers. In order to do this, knowledge was derived from the following questions.

What points of growth or directional changes does the teacher identify in his or her professional history and what events or experiences trigger these changes?

The answer to this question clarified the factors that forged the evolution of the individual teacher. It provided insight into individual perspectives of what stimulated, initiated and supported successful career changes and growth, as well as determining the resulting consequences for their teaching. This enabled the identification of stimuli for teachers' learning and growth in leadership capability or conversely their disengagement

and disillusionment with their careers.

What are the experienced teachers' current personal and professional perceptions of their careers? What are the teachers' future career orientations?

This information identified the teachers' satisfaction with their own career progress. It also indicated whether the current career and professional opportunities were appropriate for experienced teachers. Their future orientations indicated the likelihood of their positive continued participation in rapidly-changing educational environments.

The second focus of the research was to determine the factors that affected the level of involvement and commitment of these experienced teachers in their schools, particularly in terms of activating the ethos and vision of the school and determining the nature of teachers' work.

What positive and negative factors are influencing the working life of experienced teachers and what control do they feel they have over the nature of their work?

The answers to this question determined the influences affecting experienced teachers work in school, the choices, if any, they feel that they have in controlling and responding to these factors, as well as the eventual consequences for the teachers' way of working.

In what ways do the teachers feel valued and respected by their school community?

This information revealed the experienced teachers' perception of their value and regard within their workplace, clarified aspects of their perceived professional status in the school and also signalled some appropriate ways of acknowledging teachers' work.

Are the specific professional needs of long-serving teachers being met by educational systems?

With the clarification of the experienced teachers' current and future career perceptions, this research points to how educational management can respond more effectively to the specific professional needs of the increasing number of experienced teachers in schools.

The third and final focus of this research was to describe the role that these experienced teachers and other senior personnel in schools play in responding to the need for

educational change.

What are teachers' lived experiences of change in their work place?

This knowledge identified teachers' perceptions of the politics and power issues relating to processes of change in schools as well as the roles that they typically play.

What management and professional development strategies could encourage mid and late-career educators to develop as life-long learners and positive contributors to educational change?

Knowledge of teachers' experiences in professional development and personnel management helped identify strategies that have a positive influence on the professional growth of experienced teachers and their continued involvement in directing and implementing educational change.

1.4 Focus of the Study

This research focuses on the working lives of secondary school teachers. Although the four participants are currently working in the same school, they have had extensive and quite varied work experiences in secondary schools throughout South Australia and, in one case, even overseas. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) state that secondary schools have a very strategic position in the education system, straddling the values and traditions of primary grades and higher education, creating 'an especially complicated cultural terrain' for secondary school teachers (p. 125). While teaching at any level is a complex and demanding job, McLaughlin and Talbert acknowledge that these teachers manage tensions between learning-centred and subject-centred teaching cultures and between schooling and discipline. Preparing students for higher education or work and as citizens, these teachers are subject to pressures from parents, employers, universities and society in general. Furthermore, with the particular structuring of secondary schools into subject departments, how high school teachers experience their career is strongly influenced by the strength and character of their professional community (p. 90). Hence secondary schools are complex work sites, subject to particular social and political influences which make them important research sites in gaining a better understanding of the working lives of experienced teachers.

While this study explored the engagement of experienced teachers in their work context, the focus was not on those individuals who had become totally disillusioned or cynical about their teaching career, nor people who had abandoned their jobs as teachers, nor even those who remained in them with high levels of dissatisfaction. This study explored the working lives of four experienced secondary school teachers who were generally well respected, effective teachers who still had satisfying careers. It is argued that such teachers are a particularly significant source of experience and expertise for their junior colleagues, schools and the system generally. This is because they have already established themselves as good teachers who have extensive experience in schools teaching more than one generation of children and, most importantly, they still have a desire to teach. It is this type of experienced teacher who can provide the educational leadership necessary to develop and inspire our young teachers, while transmitting, and hence, preserving their extensive workplace knowledge and expertise.

The intention of this study was to determine how these teachers have experienced and responded to factors affecting their career progression to date. Their stories were historically positioned and considered with respect to the teacher's workplace and work conditions at that time. In addition, the study identified conditions in their present working context that were motivating or threatening their commitment to their career and the effect this had on their future intentions. At the time the research was undertaken, the experienced teachers were all employed at the same school, a Christian secondary college in South Australian, which will be referred to as Horizon College. The College has a strong historical tradition of student-centred education and so has a well-articulated school vision. It was the intention of the research to identify the significance, if any, of this particular characteristic of the workplace in influencing the engagement of the experienced teachers with the College.

The research focuses on the College as the current workplace of the experienced teachers but also acknowledges the influences from a number of schools in their professional histories. Thus the study identified strategies for the effective management of late-career teachers but also identified some of the factors that promoted or hindered the positive career development of these successful teachers.

1.5 The Significance of the Study

Statistics regarding the age distribution of the national teaching force reveal that in 2003, 67.1 per cent of teachers in Australian Government schools were forty years or over (DEST, 2004), with 46.5 per cent of teachers having over twenty years of teaching experience (Harris & Jenz, 2006, p. 39). These statistics emphasise the skewed age distribution of Australian teachers leading into this century and identify the experienced teacher as a significant cohort of the teaching force. The MCEETYA (2005) report, *'Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary Teachers in Australia'*, predicted that by 2009 about 86000 teachers, representing approximately 34 per cent of the national teaching force, will be over 55 years of age and that another 48000 will reach this age between 2010 and 2014 (p. 132). While this statistical information clearly has a logistic purpose, this situation has far greater implications than just future employment plans to avoid teacher shortage. There are implications for the process of educational change, the nature of professional development and personnel management as well as career structures and rewards for experienced teachers, which warrant research into the working lives of this particular cohort.

Dinham (1996) outlines some specific considerations in his discussion of the implications of Australia's ageing teacher population. He warns that the lack of diversity in the age of teaching staff may limit innovation in schools, with increasing numbers of teachers in the latter stages of their careers and fewer beginning teachers to act as change agents or sources of new approaches. He also highlights that a social distance may exist between teachers, students and their parents due to significant age differences. Furthermore, he suggests that professional development and training both in content and delivery may not meet the specific needs of the experienced teacher and finally that with teachers at the top of their incremental salary scales, the existing range of incentives and rewards may not be relevant for the experienced classroom teacher. Dinham signals the possible consequences of an ageing teaching population and he calls for 'additional, more context specific research' (p. 28) pertaining to teachers aged over forty. This study provides some such research.

The findings of this research demonstrate the reality of the working lives of successful

experienced teachers who are still gaining satisfaction from their jobs. Characteristics of their current worksite, a school with a well-articulated ethos and vision, have been considered as factors that engage or disengage these teachers with their work. The findings of this research suggest some of the strategies that facilitate the effective management of late-career teachers. In addition, the professional histories of these teachers have revealed the experiences and opportunities that have thwarted or supported their career development. These findings can inform the establishment of structures within the educational system that promote and support the career development of young teachers as lifelong learners and educational leaders in schools.

This research was a case-study of my current place of employment and the participants were my teaching colleagues. While this situation facilitated the conduct of the research, it also posed methodological and ethical challenges which are discussed in Chapter Four. Before continuing with the discussion pertaining to this study, it is important to review the literature about the theories concerning human motivation as they relate to teachers' workplaces and indeed the nature of teachers' work and the factors shaping it.

Chapter Two: Motivation and Teachers' Work

This literature review identifies and analyses the research pertaining to theories of motivation that are relevant to teachers' work. It also considers the nature of that work and the political forces controlling it. It explores the specific issues arising from the ageing teaching population in Australia and the factors influencing teachers' job satisfaction and engagement. Finally, this review discusses the research surrounding teachers' professional development and the role which collaborative communities play in supporting teachers as agents of change in schools.

2.1 Theories of Motivation Relevant to the Workplace

To identify the factors that engage people in their work place, it is important to consider what motivates them. While human behaviour is very complex, a review of the literature on human needs suggests that we will expend energy, effort and emotion towards satisfying our human needs (Maslow, 1970; McGregor, 1985; Johnson, 2004). Exploring the basic hierarchy of these human needs, and the capacity of the teachers' work context to satisfy these needs, may help to identify aspects of teachers' work that are engaging or disengaging them in schools and ultimately facilitate the creation of a work context that integrates both individual and organisational goals.

According to Maslow's hierarchy (Maslow, 1970), the most basic of human needs are the physiological needs such as hunger, warmth and shelter which, when satisfied, no longer dominate our behaviour and are replaced by new and higher order needs, one of which is safety — protection from danger, threat and deprivation. Today's workplace does offer protection for employees' safety through legislation and Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare practices but there is also a need for security. For permanently appointed experienced teachers there is considerable security in the continuation of their employment. So for most, the necessary level of security in the workplace is more for the 'fairest possible break' (McGregor, 1985, p. 37) rather than physical safety. McGregor identifies this need for procedural fairness is of a lower order, but states that it can become a powerful motivator if employees consider themselves in a dependent relationship, subjected to arbitrary deprivation.

When physiological and safety needs are satisfied, social needs become important motivators for behaviour. These are the needs for giving and receiving friendship and love; of belonging, which Johnson (2004) identifies as the need for *affiliation* (p. 47). While these needs can be met in people's personal and community lives, teachers spend a considerable amount of time in their workplace, schools. The school context should satisfy teachers' *affiliation* needs both for the health and welfare of the employees, as well as serving to motivate and engage teachers in their work. These *affiliation* needs will be met when the teacher feels appreciated, acknowledged and cared for, while experiencing a strong professional association with the school community and an alignment with its values and purposes. However, if teachers feel lonely and ostracized, or if they feel their efforts are under-valued, or if the school ethos or actions compromise teachers' personal values, their *affiliation* needs are not being satisfied. In this case, McGregor (1985) suggests that their behaviour will become resistant, antagonistic and uncooperative and they may physically or emotionally retreat from the context in which they work. This behaviour is not characteristic of the individual but rather a consequence or symptom of their inability to satisfy their human needs (p. 38).

When the lesser physiological, safety and social needs are reasonably satisfied, needs that are egoistic become motivators. According to Johnson (2004), these are needs of *achievement* and *influence* and are particularly pertinent to a work context (p. 47). *Achievement* relates to one's self-esteem. There is a human need to feel competent, knowledgeable and successful, with a degree of autonomy, self-respect and self-confidence. *Influence* is related to one's reputation, feeling respected, listened to, acknowledged and recognised and when these motives are frustrated, one feels powerless, dominated and devalued. The final pinnacle in the hierarchy of human needs is that of *self-fulfilment*. This is the need to reach one's full potential, striving for creativity which is achieved through continued self-development. It is the pursuit of this human need that would encourage teachers as lifelong learners and ensure they were fully engaged in their workplace.

McGregor (1985) claims that, unlike the more basic needs, these higher level needs are rarely satisfied and humans will pursue, indefinitely, more and even more satisfaction

once these needs become important (p. 38). Therefore, the human needs for *affiliation*, *achievement* and *influence* are essential considerations in the quest to motivate teachers in continued, rewarding career progression, possibly leading to *self-fulfilment*. It is not possible for any school context to guarantee a teacher a sense of achievement, or the power of influence over their community. Nor can a school create in a teacher the drive for self-fulfilment, but the work place should provide conditions that encourage and enable a teacher to seek those satisfactions and should not frustrate or thwart the teacher in the effort (Johnson, 2004, p. 47). Hence, it is important to gain more knowledge about the features that might characterise such a working environment and further, how this would present itself in schools.

2.2 The Nature of Teachers' Work

To understand fully how teachers' human needs can be met through their work, it is necessary to understand the nature of that work. This requires clarification of the complex role they play in the educational system, not just at the 'coalface' in the classroom but in respect to their relationships with all stakeholders — students, parents, school management, local authorities, policy makers, governments and society. Such an understanding can also highlight the possible benefits of experienced teachers remaining motivated and engaged in their schools.

Teachers typically experience questions about their work — 'What about all the holidays you get?' and 'But you're finished at 3.30 everyday', and even 'I don't know how you put up with those kids'. While most parents know the euphoria experienced when their child has a 'good' teacher and the agony when they have a 'bad' one, teachers feel that there is little understanding beyond educational circles of the complex nature of their job. The work of practising teachers is affirmed, however, by the research on their work by scholars such as Fullan (1993), Hargreaves (2000), Ayres (2001) and Barone (2001) who address the question 'What is it that teachers do?' Ayres concludes,

A life in teaching is a stitched together affair, a crazy quilt of odd pieces and scrounged materials, equal parts invention and imposition. To make a life in teaching is largely to find your own way, to follow this or that

thread, to work until your fingers ache, and your eyes give out, and to make mistakes and then rework large pieces. It is sometimes tedious and demanding, confusing and uncertain, and yet it is often creative and dazzling: Surprising splashes of colour can suddenly appear at its centre; unexpected patterns can emerge and lend the whole affair a sense of grace and purpose and possibility.

(Ayres, 2001, p. 1)

The difficulty of describing the nature of teachers' work is that it is an 'intensely human activity' and hence enormously variable; its holistic nature defying definition (Schools Council, 1990, p. 46). Considering the practical responsibilities of a school teacher, it is evident that they do more than just teach and their actions are not easily separated into clearly distinguishable components. The profession is more than the sum of its parts. In addition to planning, teaching, assessing and reporting, teachers have other responsibilities such as keeping records, supervising the yard, contacting parents, organising excursions, coaching sports teams, overseeing school buses, settling disagreements, organising charity events and class lunches, and managing teaching teams. When trying to seek a description of the role of the teacher, 'straightforward images and one-dimensional definitions dissolve, and teaching becomes elusive, problematic, often opaque' (Ayres, 2001, p. 5).

Barone (2001) describes the outcomes of teaching as 'enormously complex, wide-ranging, highly ambitious, profoundly personal, unquestionably social, intrinsically political and inevitably subjective' (p. 1). It is not clear where a teacher's responsibility starts and ends. Barone, in his book *Touching Eternity*, journeys into the lives of one teacher and his students to explore the lasting differences a teacher may make. Rich life narratives revealed the original teenage perceptions distorted by memory and yet the traces of the teacher's influence in the students' lives remained elusive. Saltrick (1998) reflects on her teachers' legacy when she writes, 'I may not remember the exact words my teachers spoke, and over time I must confess that some of the content has faded, but at this very moment I can feel their energy, their passion, their heat right here inside me, as vividly as I did half a lifetime ago' (p. 4). These narratives serve to permit the

members of the teaching profession to strengthen their beliefs about the value of their vocation and worth to society. For dedicated teachers, their work is a powerful calling and they are driven by a strong sense of moral purpose to make a difference in the world and make a difference in the lives of the young people they teach (Ayres, 2001, p. 6).

Ayres (2001) emphasises the relational and interactive nature of teaching (p. 84). Regardless of the site of employment or age level taught, a teacher will encounter a large number of varied interactions with students, colleagues, parents and managers during the course of each day. The majority of teaching is practised institutionally and although teachers spend the majority of their time in classrooms, isolated from their colleagues, they do so in the context of an organisation and a set of discourses that affect their way of working (Schools Council, 1990, p. 46). Hence, to gain an understanding of the factors that affect a teacher's performance in this very complex and diverse role, it has to be considered within the specific school context, mindful of the nature and frequency of the interactions between the teacher and the other stakeholders of the system. Maclean and McKenzie (1991) suggest that a relational approach to inquiry is essential in order to take into account the reality of teachers' work with respect to the social relationships and processes which affect them (p. 53). Such literature supports work stories as valuable data for research about the reality of teachers' work.

Having identified the importance of the interpersonal relationships in a teaching role, it is concerning that much research has highlighted the professional isolation of teachers and that the act of retreating into their classrooms is a common defensive action of teachers who encounter work place conflict and pressures for educational change (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Hargreaves, 1995; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). Peter Senge, in his conversation with O'Neil (1995), described the educational enterprise as a multi-levelled organisation which is very stratified (teachers, principals, off-site administrators and controlling bodies) and as such is an organisation with a low ability to learn. He claims it is only when people from multiple constituencies work together that significant innovations will endure; '...committed teachers with some bright ideas, in concert with a principal who has a particular view of her or his job, in concert with a superintendent who is in line with that principal, and in concert with people in the community who are

very much a part of the innovation process' (p. 22). Effective educational change relies on the communication and interaction between the teacher and all the professional interfaces in their working context. Hence, it is important to identify the conditions or experiences within schools that contribute to teachers' professional isolation and withdrawal and conversely, those which promote harmonious relationships and effective communication (Huberman, 1993; Dinham, 1995). Only then can the stratification that limits the learning capacities of schools begin to be addressed.

Whilst the immediate working environment of the teacher is an obvious focus when aiming to identify factors that are engaging or disengaging teachers with their work, the school is not an isolated organization. The school lies within an educational system which is subjected to local, national and international political forces which may less directly, but certainly not less significantly, affect the work of the teacher.

2.3 Political Forces Shaping Teachers' Work

Kelly and Colquhoun (2005) claim that the transformations in the organisation and practice of teachers' work that have taken place over the last decades of the twentieth century have seen large numbers of teachers experiencing workplace stress to the extent that it is a major occupational and public health concern (p. 135). It is the re-structuring of schools since the 1990s which has served to reshape the context of teachers' work (Ball & Cohen, 1998; Olsen & Kirtland, 2002; Dinham & Scott, 2000; Jennings & Rentner, 2006). This restructuring is the result of political forces that act on schools and schooling systems. Dinham and Scott (2000) state that 'educators have lost control of the political agenda' and that it is economic factors that are determining the nature of the restructuring of schools (p. 5). Increased international competitiveness, reduced funding, the breakdown of other social institutions, recentralised control and a marketplace approach to schooling have reshaped the nature of schooling and teachers' work (Dow, 1995; Blackmore, 1996; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998; Smyth, Dow, Hattam, Reid & Shacklock, 2000; Smyth, 2001; Thomlinson, 2003).

International competitiveness has seen the intervention by external agencies into the educational system, requiring schools to act in the national interest focusing on

economic and market goals rather those of teaching and learning. These requirements are coupled with the reduction in funding to schools requiring them to do more with less. Schools are undertaking much wider and more complex functions as it seems that other social institutions are breaking down (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998). Tomlinson (2003) argued that in Britain in the late 1990s, the primary purpose of education was 'to ensure national economic improvement' and that this was achieved through 'tighter central control and direction of the entire education and training system and an expansion of credentialism' (p. 197). Tomlinson claims that national testing of students in literacy and numeracy undoubtedly enhanced teaching for tests and increasingly subjected teachers to the criticism for failing to meet set targets (p. 198). Tomlinson suggests that these market forces have led to increased performance accountability for teachers and this has made them reluctant to take on pupils who interfere with the credentialing of others (p. 201). The pursuit of competitive market policies has helped to create 'failing schools' (p. 198) and is contradictory to a commitment to social justice (p. 196).

In recent years, prescriptive curriculum frameworks and rigid guidelines are centralising control over Australian schools and these serve to devalue the work of teachers, implying mistrust in the professional competencies of teachers (Jeffrey & Woods, 1997; Troman, 2000). Coinciding with these influences, other seemingly contradictory trends in education are promoted at school level, with decentralising forces increasing the accountability of schools. Smyth and Shacklock (1998) draw attention to policy initiatives which imply that there are measurable outcomes that can identify the worth of teaching. From this grows a strong accountability as these outcomes are linked to the performance of individual teachers and schools, a practice which fails to acknowledge the unequal playing field which is the unique context of any school. This is heralded as an industrial approach in 'the marketplace of education' (p. 23) promoting competitiveness and productivity within and amongst schools.

Smyth and Shacklock (1998) identify contemporary terms such as autonomy, collaboration, self-management, partnership, teamwork, collegiality, networking and flexibility, as those implying that teachers are being given more control over their work. However, in reality they signal only 'pseudo-participation and quasi-democracy' (p. 23).

Within rigid guidelines, teachers are not given the opportunity to collaborate on the important decisions to be made about teaching and learning in relation to their moral purpose. Rather than real decision making, they are collaborating concerning the implementation of imposed policy, masking the control existing over teachers' work (Hargreaves, 2000; Johnson, 2003). The contested nature of collaboration and collegiality to empower or control the nature of teachers' work is explored more fully later in the chapter.

Education is political in the sense that the organisation of the school, the curriculum content and the practices are all the outcomes of contested political goals. However, this may not always be recognised by teachers who Garman (1995) sees as being intentionally 'politically naïve' (p. 23) and, hence, not aware of, nor even interested in, the politics of preferred forms of knowledge, educational practices and teachers' working conditions. Hargreaves (1995) states that 'teachers' hopes and fears are deeply embedded within and to some extent limited by the historically ingrained structures within which they work' (p.149). While teachers remain blind to these politically motivated ingrained structures, they are restricted in the amount of control they can exercise over their working context. Harnett and Carr (1995) state that any theories of teacher development must be connected to political theory and should reflect on the history and traditions of schooling. Teachers need to see themselves 'as citizens, as workers and as persons' (p. 48).

Having elaborated on the very complex factors that affect the working life of all teachers, it is important to discuss the specific group of experienced teachers who form such a significant number of Australia's current teaching force.

2.4 Ageing Teaching Force

The Australian teaching force is large and diverse with a wide range of personality types and working abilities. Recent demographic trends see older teachers emerge as a significant group with, as was noted before, 46.5 per cent of teachers having over twenty years of teaching experience (Harris & Jenz, 2006, p. 39). With the prediction that by 2009, approximately 34 per cent of the national teaching force will be over 55 years of

age (MCEETYA, 2005, p. 132), there is a need to understand the perceptions and realities of the work issues of older teachers. Some of the literature relating to the ageing teaching force was discussed earlier in Chapter One, highlighting the report entitled *Australia's Teachers: An Agenda for the Next Decade*, prepared by the Schools Council (1990) and the work of Howse (1991) and Dinham (1996) identifying the issues related to the growing concentration of older teachers and the need for more research in this area. Dinham (1996) points out that research into the characteristics of an older teacher from the 1970s may no longer be relevant today and, while he anticipates the negative consequences of an ageing teaching population, concedes that it might also bring unforeseen benefits. More research is now required to identify the actual, rather than the projected consequences.

Olsen and Kirtland (2002) in their research into the teachers' roles as mediators in school reform in America, admitted that they assumed there would be 'eventual decrease in enthusiasm necessary to embrace reform' amongst ageing teachers (p. 311). They found however that there were few consistent career cycle patterns and stated that their findings contradicted those of Huberman (1993). While it was true that some teachers who were 'far along in their career cycle, vehemently resisted restructuring efforts', they also found that others 'enthusiastically embraced reform' (p. 311). They concluded that the effects on teachers' attitudes based on career cycle were 'far murkier and more complicated than previously reported' (p. 311) suggesting a need for more research in this area. They also reported that anticipated responses to reform from veteran teachers affected restructuring decisions and sometimes became self-fulfilling prophecies. It was not uncommon for principals to claim that 'older teachers rarely embrace reform' (p. 313) and this affected the allocation of funds, professional development opportunities and leadership arrangements for older teachers in these restructuring schools. Especially for teachers approaching retirement it was not considered 'financially reasonable' (p. 313) to spend money training them at that point in their careers and Olsen and Kirtland found that 'sure enough, those teachers resisted their school's reform efforts' (p. 313).

Howse (1991) states that, in research, age is often considered synonymous with the length of teaching service but this ignores the fact that many teachers enter the

profession as mature-age neophytes. While it is true that not all older teachers are experienced, it is logical to assume that experienced teachers, who have been teaching for at least two decades, would fall into the category of older teachers.

There also needs to be a distinction made between length of service and the type of experience. The Schools Council (1990) reported that 'the amount and type of occupational experience they (teachers) have had will affect how they perform their work' (p. 46). Howse (1991) states that as life history research tends to be more place-specific, it can make a valuable contribution to understanding the perspectives of individual teachers. It seems clear that teachers' perceptions of their current work contexts need to be reviewed in relation to their career phase and professional histories. Correlation between engaging and disengaging past experiences of teachers and the conditions in their work context at that time, may clarify the significant factors that forge experienced teachers' perceptions of their role in schools.

Dinham (1996) identified some of the possible challenges facing experienced teachers, stating twenty implications arising from the ageing teacher population in Australia. The following are those that pertain directly to the working context of the experienced teacher:

- Age increases the social distance between teachers and their pupils.
- The pace of change coupled with the ageing of teachers may limit the adoption of new ideas and innovation.
- Older teachers may be less prepared to participate in extra-curricular activities that make the difference between 'good' and 'ordinary' schools.
- Young teachers, surrounded by markedly aged teachers, feel the pressure to conform to the prevailing ethos and not act as agents of change, despite their sources of new ideas and approaches.
- Teachers develop strategies to avoid or resist syllabus or policy change with little change filtering to the classroom.
- The lack of younger role models, particularly for boys, also reinforcing the stereotype of teaching as an older women's job.

- Societal changes which have occurred since teachers went to school cause them to experience 'culture shock'.
- Increased mobility, which can be invigorating, is not available to older teachers.
- The majority of teachers are on the highest salary scale with no incentive to undertake professional development through higher study or other activities.
- Dissatisfied and unsuitable teachers are less likely to resign due to the lack of other options and focus on retirement rather than professional development.

(pp 20 –24)

Dinham describes these points as 'signposts rather than inevitable outcomes' (p. 20) and calls for more context specific research. Admittedly, he has not justified his implications by linking them to any research findings which pertain specifically to older teachers, but many of these 'signposts' are indicators of teachers disengaging with their school context. If these were real outcomes of the ageing teaching force, they would threaten the effectiveness of schools and their capacity for innovation and change. These forecasts warrant research into the work lives of experienced teachers and their levels of engagement with their school context and particularly, educational change.

Dinham (1996) outlines some possible actions to address the disengagement by teachers, which he has identified as a possible result of the ageing teaching population. There are four main areas into which these actions may be categorised:

1. Recognising and acting upon the sources of teachers' stress and dissatisfaction.
2. Salary scales, appraisal schemes, rewards, incentives and recognition for teachers.
3. Staff development tailored to the needs of individual teachers — specifically assisting retreating teachers to identify their needs and supporting them to undertake activities to meet those needs.
4. Establishing openness and genuine collaboration and planning in a climate where all teachers feel valued and supported.

(1996, pp 24 – 28)

A key question for this thesis arises from Dinham's work: 'How well then does the

current educational system provide these conditions and opportunities for experienced teachers?' The literature pertaining to each of the four areas: teacher stress, appraisal and reward, educational change and professional development, and collegiality and collaboration, will be reviewed in relation to the specific situation of the experienced teacher.

2.5 Issues of Stress and 'Burnout'

2.5.1 Teacher stress

Teaching is widely considered to be a stressful occupation and studies since the early part of the last century have considered the incidence of stress in teaching and its contributing factors (Coates & Thoresen, 1976). Historically, research has had a changing focus from the emotional maladjustment of teachers to the political and social factors that create the patterns inherent in teachers' work. Even so, in the 1990s, Dinham (1993) reports that teachers and stakeholders sometimes see teacher stress as 'a sign of personal weakness or failure' (p. 13). While this perception pervades, there will be little done to address the sources of stress in the workplace.

More recent research from Kyriacou (2001) indicates that teaching is one of the 'high stress' professions with typically 25 percent of teachers rating their job as 'very' or 'extremely' stressful and Austin, Shah and Muncer (2005) report that 'more than forty per cent of teachers have experienced serious symptoms of stress due to pressures of excessive workload and abusive parents and pupils' (p.64). Teachers' experience of stress can impact significantly on their working life, and how they experience that impact in their school setting may influence their engagement.

2.5.2 Stress and Burnout

Gold and Roth (1993) in their analysis of stress found it is generated by one's perceptions of a situation, which results in physical and emotional reactions. It can be either positive or negative, depending on one's interpretation. In the context of schools, Kyriacou (2001) provides a more negative interpretation, by defining 'teacher stress' as 'the experience of a teacher of unpleasant or negative emotions, such as anger, anxiety,

tension, frustration of depression, resulting from some aspect of their work as a teacher' (p. 28). Research supports the statement that if negative stress is not attended to, the process of burnout begins (Anderson & Iwanicki, 1984; Faber, 1984; Kyriacou, 2001; Austin, Shah, & Muncer, 2005). Gold and Roth (1993) define burnout as 'a syndrome which emanates from an individual's perceptions of unmet needs and unfulfilled expectations. It is characterised by progressive disillusionment, with related psychological and physical symptoms which diminish one's self-esteem. It develops gradually over a period of time.' (p.41). It is described by Edelwich and Brodsky, cited in Farber (1984, p. 325), as a 'progressive loss of idealism, energy, purpose, and concern as a result of conditions of work'. This definition, in particular, is reminiscent of the descriptors of professional decline signalled in the latter stages of a teacher's career outlined earlier. The identification of patterns of behaviour signifying disengagement may not be descriptive of career evolution for teachers but possibly signals a problem of experienced teachers suffering from burnout as a consequence of unmet needs. Given the significance of the effect of stress and burnout on the motivation and engagement of teachers, it is important to understand the sources of stress that exist in the work context of the experienced teacher.

2.5.3 Sources of Stress

Sources of stress vary with experience as teachers learn to cope with stresses inherent in their challenging work but some sources remain as those factors which are possibly less manageable or even intolerable. The research of Austin, Shah and Muncer (2005) suggested that the main cause of stress for all teachers was 'role overload or too many tasks with too little time' (p. 74). While inexperienced teachers are more stressed by their workload and inability to discipline classes, experienced teachers cite administrative sources of stress (Farber, 1984; Dinham, 1993; Goodson, 1995; Dinham 1995). They identify both school and departmental policies and procedures and relations with superiors as most stressful. Kyriacou (2001) suggested that senior managers were creating unnecessary sources of stress by setting unrealistic targets for completion times and not communicating adequately. Dinham (1993) stated that experienced teachers, in particular, did not like being treated in a condescending manner by superiors and

preferred straight answers, even if the outcome was unpalatable. In particular female teachers reported experiencing stress relating from conflict with male superiors. Dinham (1993) suggests that those in supervisory positions should undertake people management programs to alleviate such problems, suggesting that understanding and communication could avoid the disillusionment felt by older teachers

Teachers' strategies for coping with stress include either taking direct action, simply managing or organising oneself more effectively or using palliative techniques which do not deal with the stress but are aimed at lessening the feeling of stress (Kyriacou, 2001). One such palliative response may be the act of teachers retreating and isolating themselves. Faber (1984) claims that teachers retreated to their classrooms in response to perceived insensitivity and criticism by management and the general public. This caused teachers to seek satisfaction at the micro rather than macro level of their work context, with students and selected colleagues cited as their most frequent sources of satisfaction.

While teachers can employ a number of individual coping actions, Punch and Tuettenam (1996) highlight the significant difference it makes to teachers, in terms of dealing with stress, if they work in positive environments of social support. Sharing problems, gaining helpful practical suggestions, or even engaging in social activities with colleagues can alleviate feelings of stress. Professional improvement is an organisational phenomenon and, hence, the challenge of reducing teacher stress in order to promote more positive engagement for teachers with their school setting must focus on the creation of a healthy organization with a positive atmosphere of social support (Wilhelm, Dewhurst-Savellis & Parker, 2000; Kyriacou, 2001).

Kyriacou (2001) emphasises that the main sources of stress experienced by a teacher will be unique to him or her and will depend on the complex interaction between personality skills, values and circumstances, varying in different countries based on the nature of the national education systems, circumstances of teachers in schools and prevailing attitudes regarding teachers and schools held in society as a whole. This implies that research in this area needs to be context specific. Kyriacou calls for further research into several aspects of teacher stress, citing as the most interesting, the part that coping with stress plays as teachers' careers develop. He also suggests that research

could provide governments and policy makers with an insight into how various educational reforms affect teachers' experiences of stress and finally how school leadership and school organisation affects teachers (p. 7). This thesis explores these areas as they relate to experienced teachers, working in a school which has a historical tradition of student-centred education.

2.6 Appraising and Rewarding Teachers

As outlined previously, the outcomes of teaching are extremely complex, and while difficult to describe, they are even more difficult to measure. Nevertheless it is important for teachers to feel a sense of achievement in their work, to feel competent and successful with a considerable level of expertise and knowledge. While individual teachers will self-assess their performance, Dinham and Scott (2002) suggest that teachers lack a frame of reference in judging their own worth due to the isolation inherent in their work (p. 26). There may also be site-specific practices in schools to evaluate and reward teachers' achievements, although the career structures within educational system are not necessarily recognised or valued by teachers (Shulman, 1987; Jeffrey & Woods, 1997; Smyth & Shacklock, 1998; Ingvarson & Kleinhenz, 2001).

In addition to teachers' needs for appraisal and reward, are the needs of the educational system to evaluate teacher effectiveness. The quality of teaching is seen to be the most important factor in successful students' learning and, hence, the identification and assessment of good teaching practice is important to educational systems and to society. Dinham and Scott (2002) provide a comprehensive account of both the intended and actual outcomes of the Australian College of Educators Quality Teaching Awards inaugurated in 2001 in the Australian state of New South Wales. While four per cent of respondents recorded some negative effects of receiving the award, there were none that stated that it did not mean a great deal to them. The implications arising from this affirmation and acknowledgement of teachers' work suggest that it offers considerable personal and professional benefits for teachers who are 'in need and even hungry for recognition' (p. 26). The challenge is to develop 'authentic and credible' processes to ensure deserving teachers are the recipients of the award.

School systems often adopt appraisal procedures for two major purposes — one to make teachers accountable and the other to provide them with the opportunity to review and improve their practices. These appraisal procedures are sometimes linked to teachers' promotion and may be associated with financial reward or increased status. Hence, modes of appraisal can influence the career path and feature in the professional history of the experienced teacher, as well as affect their professional status.

Appropriate means of appraising and rewarding teachers has proven to be a contentious and challenging issue for many educational systems worldwide. Some twenty years ago, Schulman (1987) warned America that the political process of judging teachers' worth on harsh and independent criteria, based on generic teaching effectiveness would only be harmful to the profession. Yet in response to the Education Reform Act in 1988, Britain did just that by introducing an accountability framework (overseen by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)), based on technical competencies. An emotive account of a qualitative study undertaken in a British primary school by Jeffrey and Woods (1997) depicts how an OFSTED inspection led to staff anxiety and self-doubt about competency. This process, despite the fact that the eventual appraisal was positive, led to a weakened commitment by staff and caused a shift in their perceptions of themselves from professionals to technicians (p. 12).

Ingvarson and Kleinhenz (2001) warned the Australian educational system to be alert to attempts made in Britain to link teacher pay to performance. They described how, in 1998, Britain established a promotional level for experienced teachers, with a salary that was ten per cent beyond the top pay rate. To qualify for this level, teachers were required to complete a form and undergo an assessment conducted by Head Teachers, which, however, did not involve first hand assessment of classroom performance. This assessment was moderated by an external reviewer from a private consulting firm at a cost of \$34 million. They noted that 97 per cent of applicants 'passed'. The structure was designed to give incentives for more professional development and to accord a new status to experienced teachers, yet forty per cent of applicants considered it detrimental to their practice and nearly seventy per cent thought it detrimental to their sense of well being. This appraisal model failed to respect the work values of teachers and this

political reform did not achieve the outcomes that were intended (Ingvarson & Kleinhenz, 2001).

In Australian government schools, teachers are paid annual salary increments for their first ten to twelve years, and only in New South Wales are these linked to performance appraisal. However, this is not an effective incentive for the continued professional development of experienced teachers who constitute the majority of the teaching population and are already on the top pay scale.

After ten years' experience, the majority of better paid, higher status positions for teachers are administrative; positions that reward and value managerial competence but not classroom expertise. *The Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession* (Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, 1998) reported that 'the current salary structure acts as a disincentive for teachers to remain in the classroom' and 'promotes the view that managing schools is more important than teaching in them' (p. 113).

In the late 1990s, Australian education systems attempted to create a new career path for teachers called the Advanced Skills Teacher classification (AST). This reform resulted from a nationally coordinated teacher union campaign which sought improved salary and conditions for teachers (Seddon, 1996; Ingvarson & Chadbourne, 1997). The original concept of the AST was to provide an alternative career path, enabling teachers to stay in the teaching role and provide classroom-orientated educational leadership. This new classification featured three pay levels above the earlier mentioned incremental scale. Only the first pay level was implemented in all states. In those states where the two higher levels, AST2 and AST3, were introduced, these were contingent on a willingness to undertake additional duties and hence were seen as 'pay for extra managerial work not better teaching' (Ingvarson & Chadbourne, 1997, p. 14).

In a review of the implementation of AST, Ingvarson and Chadbourne (1997) state that the classification 'is almost universally regarded as a disappointment and an opportunity lost' and go on to state that, '...in most states, the AST has lost credibility and been brought into disrepute' (p. 18). They claim there had been a need for a professional,

rather than industrial, reform and that its implementation should have been preceded by the development of validated selection criteria and evaluation processes. For the classification to achieve some level of credibility it required rigorous evaluations and substantial salary rewards which, at the time, were not financially supported by state and federal governments (Seddon, 1996, p. 105; Ingvarson & Chadbourne, 1997, p. 20).

Shacklock, Smyth and Hattam (1996) criticised the motives and the validity of the AST assessment in South Australia, the state where this doctoral research was sited. They considered that measuring advanced teaching through workplace skills and competencies and knowledge of policy frameworks, devalued the rich contextual qualities of teaching practice. Narratives from teachers interviewed by Shacklock, Smyth and Hattam, reveal that although they considered themselves worthy of the accreditation of AST, the teachers were concerned that they would not be able to present themselves in a manner that would gain recognition. They perceived there to be a difference between the bureaucratic jargon and their own practical understandings of teaching. Some felt the assessment was more dependent on how you presented yourself rather than any demonstrated teaching ability. The process changed their thinking about the nature of their work and the value of their workplace skills (p. 359). The current evaluation process is shaping the perceptions of the classroom teacher concerning their perceived status and their value within the system but not necessarily in a positive way. Ingvarson and Chadbourne (1997) state that the AST experience highlights how the pay system has a significant long-term effect on 'teacher self-respect, commitment and professional development and the building of an accountable professional community' (p. 27).

Bottery (2003) states that in their current form, the formal career systems and incremental pay schemes are not acting as ongoing motivators for classroom teachers in their career progression. Hoyle (2001) claims that the research on the work satisfaction of teachers, consistently shows that it is related to the intrinsic rewards of teaching (p. 150). Hoyle states that the incentives and rewards that matter most to experienced teachers are the quality of their colleagues, nature of their teaching assignments, quality of their students' learning and recognition from parents, other teachers and superiors.

Teachers often complain that they give out a great deal of positive encouragement but get little in return and schools and systems need to find ways of publicly recognising the achievements of teachers that will not be considered as 'empty praise and tokenism' (Dinham, 1995, p. 67). This study of teachers' work lives is an opportunity to identify any practical and effective examples of genuine forms of recognition, valued by teachers, which are evident in the context of schools.

It seems that most of the current models for teacher evaluation in Australia are not aligned with the values of teachers and so do not serve as motivators for their advancement. In an Australian context, the research by Mayer, Mitchell, Macdonald and Bell (2005) considered the use of professional standards as tools for extending professional learning and/or for credentialing and appraisal. Their study highlighted rather than resolved 'the tension between the dual purpose of differentiating teachers and their career pathways, and extending the professional community of teachers and its collective knowledge' (p. 176). They concluded that a workable model for either purpose must emphasise teachers' ownership of the standards and provide a learning framework for using them. The model must incorporate 'a range of purposes that seek to recognise teacher professionalism, rather (than) merely regulating teacher behaviour' (p. 177). Future models need to respect teachers as competent professionals allowing them to set their own professional goals. The system must be based on trust and provide teachers with the opportunity to construct a continual learning culture in the school (Smyth, 2001). The stories told by participants in this study identify the forms of appraisal and reward which teachers considered acknowledged their career achievements and encouraged them to continue their professional development.

In addition to the appropriate appraisal and credentialing of teachers, rewards and incentives may be necessary to attract more people to the teaching profession due to future teacher shortages. Shorr (2005) describes how the shortage of qualified teaching professionals in America in 2005, has led to school districts offering incentives and bonus to attract teachers to their schools. Cash incentives are offered for overtime, coaching jobs or to those teachers who are prepared to work in difficult schools or hard-to-place subjects. Tuition fees and loans are offered in scholarships by states to

encourage students to pursue teaching careers. Other incentives for teachers include districts paying moving and housing costs, immediate opportunities for seniority, mentor programs and extra professional and personal support. Shorr reports however that the National Education Association had found that 'short-term incentives don't always solve issues (of) long-term retention and teacher shortage' (p. 4).

American States are even encouraging retired teachers to return to the classroom, introducing schemes where teachers can earn a salary and also continue to accumulate retirement benefits. Jacobson (2006) reports that these experienced teachers are being hired for 'difficult-to-fill classroom positions' and in shortage-prone areas such as mathematics, science and special education but they are also needed to meet new requirements for putting 'highly qualified' teachers in schools (p. 1). This literature highlights the need that schools have for the experience and expertise of these long-serving teachers rather than the negative stereotypes that have previously characterised ageing teachers.

2.7 Cultures of School Change and Development

Although the professional development of teachers is often viewed as a means to improve their professional abilities it is also a potential strategy for policy makers and management to implement educational change (Goodman, 1995). With there being some belief that experienced teachers are resistant to change, this review explores the culture of educational change in schools in terms of how it meets the needs of the large contingent of veteran teachers. The professional development and educational change models and modes of delivery in school contexts can also be indicators of the status of the teacher within the system.

2.7.1 Problems with Traditional Modes of Educational Change

Hawley and Valli (1999) concluded from their review of the research that there is no more effective way to change schools substantially than through professional development. While they state that key stakeholders have a common vision of professional development, characterised by opportunities for teachers to work together

on authentic problems linked to student learning, they claim that current practices in schools differ radically from this vision (p. 127).

The Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee (1998) identified one of the major criticisms of existing professional development courses as the lack of input from serving teachers regarding their content, design and implementation. Traditional methods of implementing educational change in schools feature a top-down model, indicative of bureaucratic control (Goodman, 1995; Fullan, 2001). This process is characterised by management actions, such as, diagnosing an existing problem in the school and determining a desirable focus for educational reform on behalf of the staff, or simply attempting to implement innovations or policies mandated by hierarchical bureaucracies. Certainly there are characteristics of this model of educational change evident in the recent experiences at Horizon College and the stories of the participants in this research tell of the reality of this experience for late-career teachers.

Conventional professional development experiences for teachers feature presentations by external experts which are often characterised by brief one-off sessions or workshops. These sessions tend to emphasise training in skill development and are often held away from the jobsite. These experiences are fragmented and piecemeal; disconnected from the profound issues of curriculum and learning, engaging teachers as passive learners and hence resulting in little change in classroom practice (Ball & Cohen, 1998; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Fullan, 2001).

Hawley & Valli (1999) state that this type of professional development experience does not suit adult learning needs or orientations and does not respect the cultural core of teaching (p. 134). Especially for experienced teachers, it does not acknowledge their workplace knowledge, disregards their personal identity and moral purpose in teaching, threatens their autonomy and discourages intellectual involvement in their work (Goodman, 1995, p. 65). This approach to the professional development of teachers does not promote the view of the experienced teacher as a constructor of knowledge or as a valuable educational leader in the system. The professional development experiences which feature in the stories of the research participants will indicate the type of

opportunities that experienced teachers value and recognise as facilitating their professional learning

Policy makers often claim that planned change for schools has been misinterpreted or ignored by teachers. Teachers do not just deliver the curriculum. They reinterpret, develop and define it. They allocate and manage student time, set and communicate student performance standards and expectations, and enrich or inhibit student learning (Garman, 1995). Intentionally or not, teachers modify curriculum and there is a conflict existing between the intention of the policy makers and the response to change from teachers, particularly those with more experience. However, perceiving resistance to change as a teacher problem is ignoring the culture of schools (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001).

Research suggests that rapid cycles of change are not conducive to effective educational change in schools. While it is not healthy to become complacent and uncritical, it is not possible to function in a system of continuous change (Grimett, 1995, p. 119). The endless cycles of innovations intruded by external influences, sap the strength and spirit of the school community (Hatch, 2000, p. 4; Fullan, 2001, p.22). Reeves (2006) suggested that 'educators are drowning under the weight of initiative fatigue — attempting to use the same amount of time, money and emotional energy to accomplish more and more objectives' (p.2). New policies are often considered inappropriate by teachers and their implementation would mean directing teachers' limited energies away from their classroom priorities (Rozenholtz, 1989; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 66). The voices of the participants in this study provide a window to the effects that major change in a relatively short time-frame has on teacher moral and community spirit.

Lange and Burroughs-Lange (1994) suggested that experienced teachers accommodate these external pressures for educational change by suspending judgement or shifting the responsibility to someone else. Teachers will often continue on in their accustomed way, hoping change will not be necessary as this innovation fades or is replaced by another. They may make superficial or cosmetic changes to be seen to be accommodating the change or they may merely adjust their expectations of their own performance. The result is that good teachers 'with moral purpose become victims of cynicism and

burnout' (McLaughlin & Talbot, 2001, p. 91) as they compromise their standards to accommodate imposed change. The response of the participants in this study to the fast-moving changes in their school from 2001 to 2003 will provide some insight into the ways late-career teachers resist or support reforms and the impact that substantial change has on teachers' work.

One of Dinham's (1996) concerns was that experienced teachers resist the adoption of new ideas and innovations, and Cochrane-Smith and Lytle (1992) suggested that some of the traditionally held beliefs about teachers and the art of teaching limit the development of experienced teachers as life-long learners. The belief that professional growth is a consequence of lengthy service is perpetuated by such adages as: teachers are born and not made; teaching is largely common sense; and, expertise will be gained as a matter of course through experience. An occupational culture pervades some school contexts, based on a view that competent teachers are self-sufficient, independent and can answer any question about their own practice or the larger issues of schools and schooling (p.302). Such beliefs do not encourage experienced teachers to ask questions or seek new knowledge about their craft. Hence, professional development activities for experienced teachers would tend to provide no more than updated information in an isolated instructional training format, implying that sustained learning is not required for ongoing adequate performance in the job (Ball & Cohen, 1998, p. 4).

In medicine and law, professional development is a professional registration requirement, with practitioners becoming more experienced over time. For veteran teachers, however, there is a perception that, after establishing themselves, they continue to do the same things year after year. The current structure of schools does not avail practising teachers of substantial learning opportunities as part of their workweek and in contrast to the beginning teachers who are entering their profession with innovative ideas (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999, p. 143), these experienced teachers, indeed, may not be acting as change agents in their schools. A question for this research then is what is the attitude of late-career teachers to educational change and the need for life-long learning?

With the current culture and structures in schools, experienced teachers may not always seek to undertake professional development and if they do, the professional

development, may not be that which they need (Dinham, 1996). Dinham suggests that 'retreating' experienced teachers need to be guided to an understanding of their own professional learning needs and, once identified, encouraged to undertake appropriate professional activities (p. 27). However, teachers' work and the school context need to change so that teachers and their managers will have the skills, resources and opportunity for this to occur.

The circumstances of teaching require a lot from teachers in terms of student accountability and daily maintenance, but there is little provision in their daily work context for planning, discussion, reflection and rewards (Fullan, 2001, p. 34). The nature of teachers' work is bound in the focus on daily, short-term tasks conducted in isolation from other adults, exhausting individuals and limiting their opportunity to reflect and consider the bigger picture. The construct of the school day sees teachers spending most of the time at school teaching or preparing for classes. Professional development opportunities that take the form of refresher courses and conferences are being held more often out of school hours and in term holidays. In the state where this research was undertaken, South Australia, employees in public schools are required to undertake 37.5 hours of professional development out of school hours in each school year and to support this with documented evidence. Such a requirement implies that that teacher's professional growth is not an integral part of the teaching week (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999, p. 144). This study examines what experienced teachers consider to be important in facilitating their professional growth and the sources and resources that support their professional learning.

2.7.2 Good Professional Development and Effective Models of Educational Change

Good professional development contributes to improved professional esteem for teachers and effective educational change with communication and dialogue between policy makers and teachers (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Fullan, 2000; Hargreaves, 2000).

Rather than top-down models of imposed change disregarding the culture of schools, teachers need to be involved in the identification of what needs to be learnt. The process

must engage teachers' beliefs, experiences and habits that will be difficult to tap into while they are immersed in the pressures of their daily work.

According to Hawley and Valli (1999), good professional development is characterised by:

- Shared, public, sustained interaction that focuses on teaching and not teachers, preserving the self-respect of individuals by dissociating the enquiry from teacher competency.
- The issues explored being substantive and school based, making any improvements based in the context of teaching.
- Experiences which draw on the internal expertise of those who know the culture and structure of the school so that changes are framed in that context.
- Outcomes that make the improvement the work of teachers so that they can be active in its implementation
- Goals that acknowledge that change will be a gradual process but ongoing and incremental.
- The development of a system that can learn from experience

(1999, pp 139 –144)

This structure of professional development is not workshops and courses but is concerned with developing habits of learning. This type of learning exists in what have been termed 'learning-enriched schools', 'learning communities' and 'collaborative cultures' (Rozenholtz, 1989; Fullan, 2001; DuFour, 2004). What begins to emerge from the literature is the description of the 'Professional Learning Community' which promises to offer the ideal working context for teachers. The origins, characteristics, benefits and possibilities of such a work context are discussed in more depth in Chapter Three. Questions for this research are whether these experienced teachers are undertaking good professional development and what role are these teachers playing in the change process in their schools.

2.8 Collegiality and Collaboration

Collegiality and collaboration are the basis for positive professional learning communities because of the way they promote 'shared reflection, professional learning and the pooling of collected expertise' (Hargreaves 1995, p. 154). Flagged as a positive response to the world of unpredictable problems, intensifying expectations and demands, collegiality and collaboration contrast directly with the disengagement of retreating teachers which the literature sometimes attributes to late-career practitioners (Hargreaves 1995; Dinham, 1996; Kyriacou, 2001). The benefits of collaboration have been identified and outlined by Hargreaves (1995, p.155) and these benefits could be considered as the counter-balance to the implications of our ageing teaching population as identified by Dinham (1996) and outlined earlier in the chapter.

2.8.1 Benefits of Collaboration

The first of the benefits of collaboration identified by Hargreaves (1995, p.155) was the moral support it provided teachers. While he acknowledges that teachers need more than consolation and commiseration, it is essential in the support of teachers experiencing stress, which Dinham (1996) advised was important in preventing the disengagement of ageing teachers.

There are benefits to both teachers and schools, as collaboration may provide support for teachers via reduced workloads due to increased efficiency and improved effectiveness (Hargreaves, 1995). In this way collaboration is likely to address the work overload experienced by teachers and as such is an alternative for teachers who are retreating to their classrooms as a defence against the external demands of being part of a faculty.

Hargreaves (1995) maintains managers distanced from the classroom often think that reform moves too slowly and for teachers immersed in classroom commitments time passes too quickly and in particular, Dinham (1996) suggests that ageing teachers act to limit the adoption of innovation and new ideas. Collaboration can challenge these time perspectives with common activities creating shared, more realistic timeframes for implementation. It also gives teachers some defence against the endless cycles of change

that deplete their energy and commitment. 'Collective professional confidence' that is fostered by teacher collaboration, helps teachers be more selective in implementing change, by being more politically assertive and more critical of academic certainty in the context of their school (Hargreaves 1995, p. 153).

Hargreaves suggests that collaboration also serves to pool collective knowledge and expertise which could preserve the extensive practical knowledge of late-career teachers that may soon be lost to schools. Offering the opportunity for both young and experienced teachers to learn from each other, Hargreaves (1995) claims that collaboration ensures a more consistent and complete organisational response to educational change which addresses Dinham's concerns that markedly aged staff in schools may pressure young teachers to conform to the prevailing ethos. Hargreaves also states that collaborative experiences encourage teachers to reflect on their own practice, developing a culture of continuous improvement. Such a school environment would encourage experienced teachers to continue as lifelong learners even in the late stages of their careers.

With the clear benefits of collaboration in the workplace in terms of engaging and motivating experienced teachers, this research explores the frequency and nature of the participants' collaboration with their colleagues.

2.8.2 Pitfalls of Teachers' Collaboration

Hargreaves (1995) warns of some of the pitfalls for teachers working together. Non-productive outcomes can result from forms of negative collaboration. Although the experienced teachers in this study may be collaborating with their colleagues, it may be what Hargreaves terms as 'comfortable and complacent' (p. 155) — confining collaboration to safe areas such as offering moral support and sharing resources as opposed to sharing classroom practice or shared reflection. There may also be a tendency for late-career teachers to practise what Hargreaves refers to as 'conformist' collaboration which tends to suppress individuality and serves to reinforce existing practices.

In a school which practises 'top-down' models of change there may also exist 'contrived' or 'co-optative' collaboration (p. 155). Hargreaves describes the 'contrived' form as administratively contained and controlled with procedural planning leaving little time and incentive for teachers to collaborate on their own initiative. 'Co-optative' collaboration describes opportunities which are being used as a political and administrative ruse to secure teacher compliance with educational reform driven by others. This final pitfall was discussed earlier in terms of the political factors affecting teachers' work. Smyth (2001) claims that collegiality is being used as a managerial tool, in the name of professional development to coerce teachers into implementing the politically motivated policies for economic reconstruction. He warns that collaboration can be 'co-optative of teachers and that it gives them little more than control over the implementation aspects of teaching in a context of rigidly formulated, centrally prescribed educational guideline' (p. 112). In this sense, he suggests collegiality, collaboration and teamwork are 'seductive forms of workplace control' and that teachers need to be mindful of and address the issues of power that impinge on their work context (p. 122).

This criticism is not of the principle in theory but of the principle in practice. Teachers need the space and opportunity to frame their own discourses of teaching and learning, identifying and acknowledging their own ideals and goals. They need to explore competing constructions amongst colleagues and the time to contest and resolve these issues as professionals with both academic qualifications and practical workplace experience (Hargreaves, 1995; Hargreaves, 2000; Cumming & Owen, 2001; Smyth, 2001). This study of teachers' work lives will explore the intentions and realities of collaboration, monitoring the educational and social benefits in its practice.

2.8.3 Building a Collaborative Culture

McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) found that 'how high school teachers experience their careers depends a great deal on the strength and character of their professional community' (p. 90). The participants in this study are in a unique student-centred school community where their most immediate professional work group is their subject faculty, which varies between participants. The stories of their present work experiences will

indicate the collaborative nature of their immediate work context and how this affects their engagement. The characteristics of a collaborative culture and its associated benefits can be gained from the literature.

A 'crucial factor in the formation and maintenance of learning communities for teacher research is talk' (Cochrane-Smith & Lytle, 1992, p. 309). Teachers can be self-conscious in their attempts to make sense of their daily work. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) describe the 'privacy norm' that exists between experienced teachers governing collegial relations in high schools today (p. 69). In such a context, teachers will talk about anything but their practice, taking some false pride in their professional autonomy but remaining isolated in their work. These norms can be self-perpetuating and the challenge is to re-culture a school to be more collaborative. Being a participant in this research challenged the four experienced teachers to be open and reflective about their work experiences, and while not overtly probing classroom practices, their involvement made their work as a teacher more public and scrutinised.

Research highlights the importance of principals and school leadership in development of positive professional communities (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Fullan, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Evans, 2002). McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) found through their study that in secondary schools, 'subject departments are the hands-on professional 'home' for teachers' (p. 46) and that a teaching context in one school can vary greatly in collegiality and beliefs about students and good practices between departments. However they also found that strong leadership was central to engendering and sustaining school-wide learning communities and highlight the following strategies for management at all levels to promote a thriving teaching community:

- Buffer teachers from outside distraction and disruptions
- Seek resources that support teacher growth
- Implement strategies for teachers to work together
- Develop structures to support productive conversation and exchange
- Sharing leadership
- Encourage social as well as professional interaction.

The benefits of a collaborative learning community address and reduce many of the stressful aspects of a teacher's work. Teachers' professional esteem can be enhanced by developing a culture of critical enquiry in the workplace, but it requires a shift in the perception that involvement it is not just more work 'on top' of everything else. If teachers can distance themselves from the complex classroom environment and they may be able to reflect more honestly on their work, firstly identifying and scrutinising the values and beliefs that underpin it (Smyth, Dickie & Tinning, 1986).

Fullan (1991) suggests that collaborative cultures lie within the grasp of those who participate in them and the 'individuals and small groups of teachers and principals must create the professional culture they want' (p. 107). Having identified the features and benefits of a collaborative culture in schools, the question is how does this culture emerge and grow from the theory into a reality in the perpetual roller-coaster ride that is the school day, term and year. Horizon College has a strong sense of community, possibly inherited from its historical founders who formed a religious order with a shared vocation for teaching in Christian schools. How then has this collaborative culture presented itself in this modern College with predominantly lay teachers?

2.9 Concluding Remarks

The complex, relational and interactive nature of teaching is well depicted by the literature that explores teachers' working lives. Although this literature says much about the work experiences of teachers there is little, other than Dinham's work, that focuses on the specific challenges facing long-serving teachers. With increasing numbers of experienced teachers in the work force it is now more important than ever to understand the specific needs and concerns of late-career teachers. The Schools Council seven-phase framework for the progression of a teacher's career, tabled in the 1990s, predicted professional decline from mid-career to retirement, and these phases correlate closely to the advancing stages of burnout. Projected concerns about the ageing teaching population were identified leading into the new century and now these concerns need to be explored in the context of a school community.

As their careers have progressed, veteran teachers have experienced the restructuring of schools which has reshaped the nature of teachers' work. Market and economic goals of schooling have disposed the focus of teaching and learning that traditionally underpinned the moral purpose of their teaching vocation. Centralised control of teachers' work through prescriptive educational frameworks and rigid guidelines is devaluing teachers' professional expertise. Recent policy initiatives have implied that there are measurable outcomes that can identify the worth of teaching, encouraging the strong accountability linking these outcomes to the performance of individual teachers and schools in a competitive environment (Tomlinson, 2003). Meanwhile seemingly contradictory trends in education are promoted at school level with contemporary terms such as autonomy, collaboration, self-management, partnership, teamwork, collegiality, networking and flexibility implying that teachers are being given more control over their work, yet rather than real decision making they are collaborating concerning the implementation of imposed policy. Absorbed by the daily busy-ness of their work as well as its crucial importance, many teachers remain politically 'naïve' and hence neither aware of nor even interested in the politics of preferred forms of knowledge, educational practices and teachers' working conditions. While the nature of their work is reshaped by curriculum and pedagogical changes, the historically ingrained structures within which they work remain unchanged.

While incentives and rewards afforded to experienced teachers by educational systems are generally seen as ineffective and unattractive, individual teachers and schools are being made more accountable and competitive against 'marketplace' standards and rigid guidelines. Trends of promoting collegiality and collaboration in the work place as ways to empower teachers and improve job satisfaction and effectiveness, are being criticised as disguised forms of teacher control. Collaboration and collegiality are supported in theory but teachers and schools need to know how to identify, establish and maintain the positive forms of collaboration.

There is considerable consensus concerning the features of effective professional development and importance of establishing and maintaining a genuine collaborative professional community that values and supports all teachers, not just those in the latter

stages of their careers. What is important for schools, however, is to find practical and effective ways to break seemingly inevitable change cycles and to make real rather than contrived and superficial changes to culture in order to genuinely empower teachers while they still believe in the moral purpose of their vocation.

Recent literature promotes the Professional Learning Community as the ideal work context for teachers and the next chapter reviews its conceptual origins, identifying characteristics, benefits for teachers and its limitations for schools.

Chapter Three: Professional Learning Communities

3.1 Features of a Professional Learning Community

The school, as the work site of the experienced teacher, is a complex social setting. While traditionally this setting has been characterized by isolation, balkanisation and top-down models of change, literature over the last decade has called for the reculturing of schools as Professional Learning Communities (PLC). The intention is to change the culture of teachers' workplaces to provide more collaborative and empowered contexts for teachers (Seashore Louis & Kruse, 1999; Marks & Seashore Louis, 1999; Seashore Louis & Leithwood, 1999, McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Fullan, 2001; Huffman & Hipp, 2003; DuFour, 2004; Buffum & Hinman, 2006)).

Whilst there are many different descriptions of what constitutes a Professional Learning Community, four common characteristics emerge: shared vision, collaborative culture, supportive and shared leadership and norms of reflective practice.

Shared vision: This first characteristic recognises that all staff must share a vision for school improvement that has, at its core, a focus on improved student learning. On the micro level, within the school context, student welfare must be central to all school improvements. Dedicated teachers have a strong sense of moral purpose to make a difference in students' lives and if the purpose of education is more closely aligned with this vision rather than the national interest focusing on economic and market goals, the school context is more likely to meet teachers' need named as *affiliation* (Johnson, 2004)

In addition, strong, positive collegial relationships and a sense of community also provide the opportunity to satisfy this desire for *affiliation*.

Collaborative culture: Such a culture is characterised by staff at all levels working collaboratively to improve learning outcomes, supported by collegial relationships hinged strongly on values of respect, trust, communication, caring positive relationships with norms of critical inquiry and improvement. School structures need to provide the

time, place and opportunity for these norms to develop and flourish in the school setting.

Supportive and shared leadership: A PLC requires leadership which identifies, articulates and models the vision, conveys high expectations, provides support to individuals, promoting a productive culture and structures that encourage broad participation in decision making. This highlights one of the main cultural shifts for schools in viewing teachers as having shared responsibility for leadership and decision making rather than them being dealt the role of implementers and followers in educational change and innovation. This characteristic of the workplace satisfies the human need for *influence* (Johnson, 2004)

Norms of reflective practice: Significantly, the conditions for the establishment of a PLC require a deprivatisation of practice where peers work collaboratively to plan and solve problems, apply new knowledge, skills and strategies and have a commitment to their own professional learning. Teachers observe each other and offer encouragement and feedback on instructional practices.

With these practices in the workplace comes the opportunity for teachers to achieve and gain valued recognition for their *achievement* (Johnson, 2004)

3.2 Origins and Derivations of the Concept of a PLC

The concept of a PLC emerged from Organizational Learning theory and hence some parallels can be made between the four characteristics and Senge's (1993) five disciplines for corporate management which are designed to build learning organisations in the business sector. This derivation has some appeal to policy makers in light of the restructuring of schools as powerful players in improving the national economy in the global market place as discussed earlier in 2.3 Political Forces Shaping Teachers' Work. Nevertheless, the adaptations of the original theory to educational settings and indeed the desirability of affiliating our educational systems with the business world, warrant further discussion.

While the guiding principles of a Professional Learning Community promise substantive school improvement, the boundaries of their influence are clearly limited to the school

setting. The community is defined in a localised fashion and the features of a Professional Learning Community are described for interpretation by the management, teaching staff and students of a single site as if a school was autonomous and isolated. Certainly the recent educational writings reviewed by Huffman and Hipp (2003) concerning Professional Learning Communities describe practices and structures within individual schools. The ideas surveyed in this review firmly place the responsibility for school improvement on the teachers and management of each school, to be achieved through collaborative work practices, all the while assuming conformity to organizational structures, standards, frameworks and measures to ensure accountability. Targeting each school as the site for educational improvement and letting the 'buck' rest with the teachers and management in those schools, denies the global influences that have led to the restructuring of schools and the politically driven changes to the nature of teachers' work.

A more systemic view of learning communities can be drawn by returning to the foundation work by Senge (1993), 'The Fifth Discipline. The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization'. This original framework by Senge is not filtered and adapted by the assumptions and beliefs that limit us to our familiar ways of thinking in educational systems. Certainly the disciplines of a Learning Organization that were identified by Senge are evident in the educationalists' description of a Professional Learning Community, however, the difference lies in the absence of the all important 'Fifth Discipline' that Senge himself recognizes as the most central and all encompassing discipline. The 'Fifth Discipline' is one of Systems Thinking and this is the dimension that much educational literature has failed to recognize.

Systems Thinking leads to considering the interconnectedness of life and to seeing wholes rather than parts. If applied, this discipline would not lead educationalists to focus so exclusively on what teachers and managers do in schools but they would broaden their vision to see each educational site as part of the global community, not just educationally but socially and politically.

Systems Thinking recognizes that structures influence behaviour and this leads people to see that problems arise from underlying structures rather than individual mistakes or ill

will. When placed in the same system, people however different, tend to produce the same results and this provides evidence that the system causes its own behaviour (Senge 1993, p. 40). Managerial principles that offer palliatives and symptomatic solutions without addressing fundamental causes or those which confront limits to growth by pushing harder rather than identifying the limiting factors are not employing Systems Thinking.

For experienced teachers common behaviours such as retreating to their classroom, resistance to change or departmental balkanisation could be attributed to non-systemic thinking. If teachers are in a work context where their responsibilities are limited to the boundaries of their position, working within a system over which they have no real control or influence and subjected to rigid internal division that inhibits inquiry across boundaries, they will see themselves as helpless reactors rather than active participants in shaping their reality. Such a context certainly fails to meet their need for *influence* and also their degree of *affiliation*. In contrast, a holistic perspective of Systems Thinking on a local, national and international level enables people to feel a part of something bigger than themselves and gives them a feeling of connectedness and possibly the capacity to actively shape the reality of their work.

With Senge identifying this discipline as the most important and integral to Organisational Learning and with so many applications of Systems Thinking to educational systems, one wonders why this is the one discipline which is not overtly evident in characteristics of the espoused learning organization for schools, the Professional Learning Community.

3.3 Benefits and Purposes for Creating PLCs in Schools

Certainly the concept of a Professional Learning Community, as described earlier, has appeal to policy makers and politicians as an effective structure for implementing externally initiated changes designed to meet the needs of the knowledge economy. Teachers' work is certainly a key element in educational reform yet old models of change such as top-down have largely neglected to consider school cultures. Experienced teachers who have had negative experiences with change efforts are rightly

suspicious of change (Hargreaves, 1995b) and initiatives have been seen ‘to stop at the teacher’s door’ or receive superficial implementation yielding unintended or no real change to teaching and learning (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). It is therefore clear that a more effective approach to educational reform would need to engage the teacher as the agent for change, firstly by respecting the workplace culture in schools but more importantly by designing a context that will motivate and engage teachers by meeting their human and professional needs.

Although the workplace may play a more important role for some than others, we are more likely to motivate ourselves in our work if conditions exist that satisfy our human needs. For teachers to be committed to school improvement and change, the three human needs of *affiliation*, *achievement* and *influence* must be satisfied (Johnson, 2004). Belonging to a Professional Learning Community satisfies these needs of *achievement* — by allowing people to feel competent and successful, *affiliation* — by feeling appreciated and a valued member of a group and finally, *influence* — by empowering teachers so that they feel they have a voice and some control over their work.

So the concept of a Professional Learning Community appeals not only to the policy makers but also the educationalists and teachers who yearn for the opportunity to create a new work context where educational policies may move away from imposed purposes and alien agendas toward a renewal of the moral purposes of schools to focus on teaching and learning (Hargreaves, 1995b; Bottery, 2003). In a Professional Learning Community, as one researcher suggests, ‘teachers are no longer independent contractors loosely affiliated by a parking lot, but rather collaborative teams who share lessons and best practices’ (Buffum & Hinman, 2006, p. 17). To teachers, who value community over all else, this new way of working replaces an isolated work context for a climate of trust and collegiality, increasing their satisfaction and renewing their professional pride (Seahorse Louis & Kruse, 1998).

With seemingly conflicting purposes between policy makers and teachers, whose needs would be served by reculturing schools as Professional Learning Communities? Research conducted in schools that have developed such a culture, reports increased school effectiveness along with heightened motivation and commitment from staff

(Seashore Louis & Kruse, 1999; Seashore Louis & Leithwood, 1999). With the collegiality and empowerment comes the voluntary work intensification with teachers working up to fifty hours a week (Seashore Louis & Kruse, 1999; Shacklock, 1998) and reporting that they feel energized rather than burnt out by the long hours. One would question the long term well-being for individuals who are making such a commitment to their work at the expense of leisure, family and friends. Indeed such evidence supports Hargreaves' (2000) claims that such a work culture is a form of exploitation and enslavement. Even so he is supportive of organizational learning theories informing educational change but like others he warns of limitations to its application (Seashore Louis & Leithwood, 1999; O'Neil, 1995; DuFour, 2004; Bottery, 2003)

3.4 Limitations of Organisational Learning Theories to Education

The concept of Professional Learning Communities has grown out of the theories about Organisational Learning in the business sector, and while there are obvious parallels, what limitations should be considered when transferring these principles to education?

Professional Learning Communities help people see problems as opportunities and not occasions for attributing blame. This leads to positive solutions to those problems which are reasonable and manageable and empowers teachers to be more critical in implementing policy demands. But on the other hand, Organisational Learning theory advocated members sharing responsibility for the problems generated by the system. In most current school contexts this would appear to be unrealistic for teachers when they have to deal with mandates of assessment and curriculum frameworks over which they perceive they have no control. On the other hand, this may be conceivable in a PLC where teachers believe they have the capacity to shape their own work.

Effective schools must be open to continuous learning but must also protect elements of tradition, stability and consolidation. Commitment to continuous improvement and un-equilibrium engendered by Organizational Learning can be destabilizing to 'institutions that value cultural transmission and stable socialization among their many goals' (Hargreaves, 1995b).

While there can be many arguments for how the theories may play out in the school context, the possible positive and negative outcomes for schools working as Professional Learning Communities depend on whether teachers themselves can take responsibility for configuring the context in order to improve teaching and learning outcomes. Even Senge, acknowledges that ‘innovation in education really is much more challenging than it is in business, because educators have these multiple constituencies’ (O’Neil, 1995). While businesses may be working directly towards improving their products, surely educational organisations would have different social and political purposes. Schools should be inclusive regardless of wealth, race or religion and promote reflective thinking that is independent of the influences of state or economics and questions existing cultural frames of reference. It is for this reason that Hargreaves (1995b) stresses that it is important for teachers to challenge the business rhetoric and regain the discourse and purpose of education.

In contrast to traditional work contexts, Professional Learning Communities offer a collegiate culture promising *achievement*, *affiliation* and *influence* that can motivate and renew teachers. However, like all healthy communities, the members must recognise the political forces which are acting and use them in a positive way to establish and maintain the conditions and motivation for school renewal that promotes improved outcomes for the students.

Chapter Four: Methodological Issues and Challenges

4.1 Critical Inquiry

This study investigates and explores the context of the working life of four Horizon College experienced teachers in their school community to identify the complexities, tensions and contradictions in their work that affect their motivation, engagement and roles in educational change. This aim might be considered congruent with an Interpretive approach which explores what is meaningful and relevant to the people being studied in their particular setting (Schwandt, 1994; Neumann, 1997). Indeed, one important purpose of the study is to portray authentically the lived experience of being a teacher and an experienced professional, working in a school and its broader community. Yet to gain the bigger picture of teachers' work, these work lives need to be considered within a socially contextualised frame where the political forces and agencies of power affecting the organization and control of the work context can be identified. This acknowledgement that people's lives are influenced by external structural forces suggests the need for a more critical orientation.

A process of critical enquiry probes surface reality, noting change and conflict that is not always apparent (Harvey, 1990; Neumann, 1997). It identifies issues of power and oppression in relation to the existing social order with the intention that such knowledge may be a catalyst for people to transform social relations and improve conditions (Crotty, 1998). Critical theories encourage the exploration of the power relations surrounding teachers' work and work contexts to discover the social and political forces that are shaping the work of teaching.

Good critical theory enables participants to study the past and draw subjective meaning for their own experiences but also attempts to locate the issues in historical and structural contexts. This type of research may assist participants to uncover myths or hidden truths so they can reconceptualise past experiences and perhaps build a different future for themselves. Garman (1995) termed teachers to be intentionally 'politically naïve' (p.23) and not interested in the political forces controlling educational practices and teachers' working conditions. Bottery (2003) in his discussion of educational

organisations argues that they ‘create a low-trust culture of unhappiness, which in turn generate(s) crises of teacher morale, recruitment, and retention’ (p 197). While Bottery’s account focuses on the United Kingdom system in the discussions pertaining to the national level, the identified global forces relate to the Australian system. These two perspectives combine to suggest that teachers are a marginalised group, and hence it is appropriate to study the work of experienced teachers through critical enquiry, enabling their voice to be heard and locating their work lives in broader social, cultural and political spheres (Shacklock, Smyth & Hattam, 1998). In the context of this study, a critical approach enables the researcher and the research participants to search for emancipatory knowledge about the issues of power and influence that may be retarding the positive career development and continued engagement of teachers (Crotty, 1998).

4.2 Positioning the Researcher

4.2.1 My Value Position as a Researcher

Critical inquiry also allows the researcher to take a strong value position, which inevitably I hold in relation to this research, both as an experienced teacher and given my long-term employment in the South Australian educational system. I believe that experienced teachers have an unrealised potential in education and that in their isolation, they have become ‘trapped in a web of social meanings, obligations and relationships’, misled or mistreated, possibly unwittingly, with the consequence of losing some control of their professional lives (Neumann 1997, p.76). My research is overtly critical in its intent to enlighten the participants through the exploration of their historical and current work context in such a way that the experience itself becomes a catalyst for change.

Critical social research assumes that the world is changed by reflective practical activity and is thus not content to simply identify the nature of oppressive structures but to point to ways in which they are combated through praxis.

(Harvey, 1990, p. 32)

My original intentions as a researcher were to work together with the participants gaining an awareness of the contradictions that are hidden in the commonplace

understandings of their past experiences. Becoming aware of the extensive time commitment this would require from the participants and mindful of their work demands, I took a hierarchal position in the generation of theory which may have diminished the emancipatory purpose of the research. However, when the participants and researcher engaged in dialogue to negotiate meaning from this research, the emergent theory evoked both recognition and response from the participants, and it is this feature that Habermas (1971) stated is most central to achieving that emancipatory purpose. The discussions of the emergent theory were conducted in an environment that encouraged both supportive and contradictory perspectives; as participants were invited to challenge the researcher's assumptions and biases. The participants had access to the initial analyses of each interview and were asked to critique interpretations for authenticity. Smyth and others (2000) claim that this type of reflexivity, which has been built on a recognisable representation of the participants' work life and work context, promotes the generation of valid and useful theory (p. 60).

4.2.2 Insider Research

I am a current and long standing employee at the site of my study with an intimate knowledge of the history of the College as well as its ethos and organisational structure. As such, I am an insider researcher in this project. In addition to being an insider to the setting of the research, I am an experienced teacher myself and thus, I have existing beliefs and theories that have influenced the design, the course and outcomes of my research. In taking a critical approach, I have not attempted to eliminate my effect on the research setting but have included myself in the social world that is under study. The challenge for me was to recognise the influences that affected or constrained all the participants in the study, as well as refraining from either imposing or guarding my own value position. As a researcher, I endeavoured to remain reflexive, extending this to include a critique of my own biases. My voice and at times, my own story, have been included in the analysis in an acknowledgement of my presence in the realm of the study.

Being an insider to the setting was beneficial to the conduct of the research. As a researcher, I had continuous admission to the site of study and easy access to the

participants. I was able to be flexible in scheduling interviewing and discussion times and on several occasions participants requested we postpone appointments at late notice. This flexibility respected the busy-ness of teachers in schools and reduced the impact of their participation in the research on their work responsibilities.

Having taught on the campus for twelve years, and being the leader of the Social Committee for nine years, I have had the opportunity to gain the trust of teachers on staff. I had an existing relationship with the participants, both personally and professionally and I was familiar with their current work setting as it is also my own. Our shared workplace possessed a culture of collegial support and my long term associations with all of the participants promoted openness and trust in the research process. As the participants and I were all experienced teachers in the same workplace, we held a strong association. This sense of affinity did support open and honest dialogue but on the other hand, it may not have encouraged the teachers to reflect on the perspectives of the other stakeholders in schooling such as students, parents, managers and policy makers. Knowing I was both aware of, and sympathetic to, the challenges faced by experienced teachers in their work, the teachers may have presumed they would receive an empathetic response from me. It is also possible that we may have shared some of the stories previously in staffroom discussions where our interchange may not have been reflective in nature but with a different purpose to provide each other with moral support. Hence our previous associations as colleagues could have affected the nature of our dialogue in the research relationship.

Mindful of this, the first interview experiences were organised to establish a reflective approach and a reciprocal relationship between researcher and participant. I conducted our discussions in an interview room and not the informal setting of the staff areas where we might adopt familiar roles. Through my interview techniques, I established myself as a critical listener encouraging reflective responses through open questioning. I empowered the participants by listening intently and recording important points on paper even though the interviews were audio recorded.

The 'privacy norm' that exists in the teaching culture suggests that teachers will talk about anything else but the reality of their struggles and challenges in the classroom (Mc

Laughlin & Talbert 2001, p.49). Pomson (2004) states that teachers are unlikely to divulge issues of stress, lack of promotion or professional engagement unless they trust their audience and are secure in their good intentions (p. 653). In the interviews the teachers appeared comfortable in sharing detailed and personal accounts, secure in the fact that I have lived many similar experiences. As well as our long term associations, my detailed explanations about the intention of the research and its conduct encouraged them to trust my integrity. It is still possible, however, that there were some experiences they were not prepared to share, considering that we work together everyday and would continue to do so at the conclusion of the study. This situation was necessary to the ethical intentions of this study.

The status and privilege of being an insider to the College and its teaching culture supported the generation of authentic portrayals of the working lives of the experienced teachers. My familiarity with the workplace specific language and history of the school facilitated communication and the flow of dialogue. Nevertheless, it became apparent that I could not assume that their perceptions of daily reality would mirror my own. From the outset, I realised that they were telling their own stories, not mine. Rather than being disillusioned by this, I was spurred on by the alternative knowledge and perspectives these sometimes opposed, sometimes paralleled, stories provided. Certainly the teachers' professional histories and their work context on the micro level varied greatly from my own. Although we had many common memories of shared experiences, their personal stories offered me a different, if sometimes contradictory perspective of events. I was able to compare and contrast my own perceptions with those of the participants, and through our interchange, was able to support or begin to challenge previously held, theoretical assumptions regarding the working context and career evolution of experienced teachers.

4.3 Method of Inquiry

4.3.1 Case-study

Political, social, historical and personal issues are intricately woven into the working lives of late-career teachers. The school community as the workplace of the experienced

teacher is a complex social unit with multiple variables that are important in defining the teachers' working context (Merriam, 1992). Knowledge about this context is best gained by studying individual cases in a greater depth. Simons (1996) acknowledges the significant capacity of case-study research for understanding complexity in human situations and encounters in particular contexts. She suggests that the understandings generated by an in depth study with a holistic perspective can be both unique and universal (p. 17). Chase (1995) supports this view by stating that to understand the general social processes affecting teachers' work the researcher needs to focus on their embodiment in the actual practices in schools (p. 20).

Case-study data can also represent multiple perspectives. Stake (1995) states that a case-study is expected to 'capture the complexities of a single case' which we would study because 'it is of very special interest' (p. xi). My study was undertaken in the context of one school with strong historical foundations in education and well-articulated vision. Within a bounded system, this may be considered a case-study, yet the teachers working within this setting have a variety of professional histories which are now entwined in their daily practice. Past teaching experiences in metropolitan or country, single-sex or co-educational, state, systemic or non-systemic private schools; in low or high socio-economic areas; in part-time, fulltime, contract or relieving positions are experiences that prohibit the identification of a 'typical' teacher. Even within this one site of study, teachers were working in different departments and dissimilar professional and collegiate contexts, further highlighting the different perspectives of this working environment that the research participants have provided. The purpose of constructing studies of individual teacher's lives within one school is so that they can be located in the bigger picture of teachers' work, its context and evolution, and in this way the findings will have significance beyond this one setting.

Four experienced teachers at Horizon College participated in this research. While each was involved as a single case-study and will be introduced as such, Merriam (1992) claims that it is the main themes which emerged from their lived experiences that can be used as information contributing to the whole study. Anchored in the workings of the school, the teachers' case studies have enabled me to gather information yielding a rich

and holistic account of the reality of work for experienced teachers — teachers who share the same work site but possibly not the same work context.

One advantage of the case-study approach was that it was grounded in the practical reality of the school; as it was embedded in the lived experiences of working teachers. Stake (1978) states that the appeal of conducting a case-study lies in the generation of tacit knowledge, the experiential understanding, and the offer of naturalistic rather than formalistic generalisation (p. 7). The detailed investigation of ‘an instance in action’ allows attention to be given to the complexities and subtleties of teachers’ work as well as some of the discrepancies in the perceptions held concerning experienced teachers (Adelman, Jenkins & Kemmis, 1976, p.2). On one level, this study provides practical knowledge for the teachers who participated, the school community and the local sector, by informing policies and practices for the management and professional development of the experienced teachers as employees. However it also has a more global relevance, as the age distribution of the teaching force, social and political forces and agencies of power that are operating in the lives of these experienced teachers are not specific to the site nor the local context of this study.

One of the limitations of case studies may be their lack of representativeness beyond the case. The participants in this study did teach in predominantly scientific disciplines and only one of them was female. This gender disparity contrasts with the three to one, female to male ratio for teaching staff in this particular schooling sector in South Australia. The study is also restricted to a secondary school which has a unique historical foundation which will be explained in detail in Chapter Five in the description of the research setting. Nevertheless this unique foundation with its well-articulated ethos, enabled the study to examine the nexus between the engagement of the teacher and the school vision and its articulation. Simons (1996) acknowledged the importance of studying complex educational innovations in their context and these comments hold some relevance for the study of this school. She claimed that it is important to ‘study the innovation in context and understand the broad factors that contribute to the success or failure of the innovation; to capture the complexity of the interactions as the innovative ideas were interpreted in practice’ (p.20). Hence conducting research in this school

explored the significance of the historical foundations that underpin the school's purpose and its strong, well-articulated ethos, as they relate to the engagement of the experienced teachers who work there. Ultimately, this case-study should be judged on the extent to which an experienced teacher working in a similar situation would be able to relate his or her story and decision making capabilities to the findings of this research.

Finally, case-study research may be considered to have an inherent limitation due to bias, relating to the subjectivity of the researcher and the specific participants. However, as acknowledged earlier, I am an insider researcher and I am also an experienced teacher and will have biases inherent in my research regardless of my method of inquiry. All observations and analyses have been filtered through my own 'worldview, values and perspective' (Merriam 1992, p.21). Acknowledging that my own experiences as a late-career teacher as well as a member of the teaching staff, middle management and the school community have influenced my perception of reality in this case, they must also be considered as a significant advantage in terms of accessing the field of study and in creating an authentic portrayal of the work lives of experienced teachers.

4.3.2 Ethical Considerations

Special ethical considerations in the design and conduct of the research apply for an insider researcher. Malone (2003) identified four central issues relating to 'informed consent' when undertaking research in your own setting — myths of confidentiality, coercion and resistance, institutional power and relationships and the complications of conducting the research in a home site (p.800). These issues were apparent to varying degrees in undertaking this study.

Ethical considerations demand that I accorded the highest possible degree of confidentiality to participants and the school with any restraints being acknowledged initially in the Plain Language Statements signed by participants at the commencement of the research. Although pseudonyms have been used, the uniqueness of the context makes the school and in turn, the participants, more readily identifiable. Particular identifying details from the teachers' stories were omitted, unless they were considered relevant to the focus of the study. Nevertheless, it may still be possible for participants to

identify themselves from the accounts, as too could people that knew them well. Confidentiality issues became more apparent as the research progressed and so participants were given access to the accounts to ensure they were aware of and approved the information and detail therein. It was also made clear to the participants that the data would be used in a thesis and possibly academic papers.

A further ethical issue was coercion and resistance. While the four experienced teachers were willing participants, there were occasions when their role in the research may have been an imposition to them. When they were apologetic for cancelling appointments and not delivering feedback by the agreed time, I was conscious that their loyalty to me may have unintentionally exercised some coercion. Hence, I made a deliberate effort to be accommodating and understanding on such occasions.

The fact that the site of the research was my workplace and also that of the participants, underlines the political nature of this study. The issue of institutional power and relationships may have made the participants reluctant to criticize their institution for fear of reprisals. It is relevant, therefore, to acknowledge that at the time of our discussions, the College had implemented a full review of recent practices and that teachers had been fully consulted as part of this process. This review occurred simultaneously with the research interviews, and so, contentious issues were a feature of public debate at that time. This may have facilitated the participants in discussing their opinions of the College structures and practices in an open and reflective manner.

In terms of relationships between participants, these were considered to be enhanced by participation in the research, but discussions often involved other people who were sometimes mutual acquaintances and sometimes not. In most discussions, individuals under discussion remained unnamed although sometimes there was unspoken recognition between the participant and researcher. Often, because the stories were from the past, the person concerned was no longer working at the College and, in this way, the participants were able to respect collegiate relationships while still sharing their work stories. However, sharing the stories of the experienced teachers disclosed many personal feelings and experiences that made the participants very vulnerable. For this reason it was important to distinguish clearly between the research discussion and

workplace professional and personal discourse. Through my words and actions, I established a clear code of confidentiality, requesting that disclosures made through the course of the study were not to be discussed in normal staff discourse. This code was strictly adhered to, with the added condition that the identity of the other three participants was never explicit in my discussions with a participant.

To further reduce the complications related to conducting the research at my work site, I made a clear distinction between the research and work in both space and time. The interviews were often conducted several months apart and as such, there was an opportunity for me and the participants to maintain normality through customary collegiate interactions. Adelman and others (1976) stipulated that the conduct of the study should not disrupt the core business of the school or interfere with the work of the participating teachers, and I ensured this was the case by making research commitments realistic and respectful of the participants' available time.

4.4 Interviews and Work Stories

In an effort to provide a detailed portrait of the complex reality of the working context of an experienced teacher I conducted several semi-structured interviews, incorporating story telling and 'solicited narratives' (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995, p.86). The interviews were semi-structured in the sense that there were core themes to which I invited all participants to respond and these were introduced by one or two steering questions. The themes had been identified from my literature review about the nature of teachers' work and they had resonated with my own experiences of factors affecting my engagement with my work and school. Career evolution, stress factors, professional development, attitude to change and collegiate involvement were offered as topics of discussion. These experienced teachers with decades of lived experience readily accepted control of the interchange during the interviews, offering relevant and poignant stories and recounts to embellish our discussion.

Teachers' work throughout the academic year is cyclic yet there is unpredictability in the ebb and flow of school life. I conducted the inquiry over two years and, by interviewing the teachers at different points in their work cycle, I was more likely to collect balanced

and representative data. Conducting several interviews with each of the participants provided more consistent data as the responses were not all influenced by the same mood or circumstance. For example, holding an interview about stress factors on the day that reports are due will yield different responses from those collected at the end of a pupil free day. There were occasions when scheduled interviews were postponed due to the heavy work commitments and the physical or emotional states of the teachers. The added benefit in multiple interviews was that the participants and I adopted an increasingly more relaxed approach to our roles in the research. It also allowed time for reflection about each of the discussions and the identification of further questions or comments that arose from my summaries and analyses.

While having already identified qualitative research methods as the most appropriate to research the working lives of experienced teachers, storytelling and selective narratives are appropriate methods to collect authentic information about the teachers' lived experiences. Stories are part of 'teachers' socialization to their group' (Kainan, 1995, p.171) and are an informal communication mode that is part of the culture. With the lack of other formal communication between teachers, stories, often centred in the staff room, are a way of making hidden norms and values general without discussing them seriously. Teachers choose storytelling to share and make sense of their lived experiences but also to shape and shift occupational culture (Clandinin & Connelly, 1996). Clandinin and Connelly (1996) state that as 'the values shift, cover stories emerge or disappear, thereby either hiding or bringing to light previously hidden teacher knowledge' (p.29). As stories are the practised ways used by teachers to share and understand experiences as well as develop professional culture, these accounts of teaching can provide insights into many dimensions of teachers' work (Shacklock, 1998, p. 179). Data in a storied format that are 'rich in threads of time, place and character' (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p.1), can provide insights into the nature of teachers' work. The complexities of their relational work, the stresses, tensions and demands, the notion of vocation and career and glimpses of their occupational culture can be portrayed in the work stories they share.

While stories provide rich and descriptive information, it is important to acknowledge

the nature of storytelling. Stories can be structured for listening impact, with the narrator distorting his or her perception of reality to create a good story or to convey a sense of victory or triumph (Cary, 1999). While providing the respondent more latitude in answering questions, stories can also be a way for informants to avoid providing an analysis of the situation. Particularly for teachers who, as explained earlier, practise story telling as part of their professional culture, there may be some rehearsed stories that have been created to justify or support a belief, or perhaps portray a desired persona. In such cases, reciting these stories would inhibit reflective inquiry. However, the need for such a story to be rehearsed and retold many times may in itself reveal some important aspect of teachers' working lives. This research is not intended to determine some immutable truth about events in the lives of teachers but is more about how those teachers make sense of and account for the things that happen to them (Goodson, 2001).

The teachers' voices are central to this study in order to explore how these veteran professionals subjectively experience, as well as make sense of work place phenomena in changing school environments. Embodied in the work stories of the participants are the political, cultural and social restraints that are placed on teachers' work and the strategies that teachers adopt to resist such controls. Through the identification of these tensions, it is possible to conceive a more socially just work environment for experienced teachers.

Chapter Five: Research Setting and Process

5.1 The Setting of the Research

This study investigated the perceptions of experienced teachers at ‘Horizon College’ (pseudonyms have been used to conceal the identity of the institutions and individuals involved in this study), as they review their professional histories — Teacher Past, their current working context — Teacher Present and their future directions —Teacher Future. The teachers in this study are four educators, well-respected in their school, who have been teaching for at least twenty years. They told the story of their working lives with historical, systemic and both personal and interpersonal perspectives, identifying factors that had impacted on their work and professional lives and their roles in relation to educational change. While the teachers’ experiences in other schools and with other colleagues were formative in the development of their professional identities, Horizon College, the site of the study, was their current shared work place and professional community. What follows is the identification of the unique characteristics of the College and a description of the changing environment of the school over the last decade.

Horizon College is a Christian school where I am employed. It is situated on two campuses. The secondary campus lies in the outer suburbs of Adelaide with an enrolment of approximately eleven hundred students and teaching staff of eighty. The current management structure includes the Leadership Team comprising the Principal and three deputies, with the middle management level comprising two groups; the Curriculum Committee formed by the Heads of Department and the Student Development Council formed by the Year Level Directors. The Leadership Team has had several different official titles over the last ten years, including ‘The Executive’ and ‘The Campus Administration Team’ but the teaching staff and hence, the participants in this research, consistently refer to this group as ‘the management’ of the College.

The College is predominantly an all boys’ school, with approximately sixty girls being enrolled in Years 11 and 12. The majority of the students live in the local suburbs and travel to school by bus or private car. The school is one of over nine hundred

internationally that are non-systemic and owned and run by an independent organization with religious affiliation. The organisation has an extensive historical association with the education of the poor and these origins inspire the strong Christian ethos of the college for service to the underprivileged. It underpins the strong community spirit and the priorities given to pastoral support for students and their families. The College is a low fee paying school with some School Card students, whose families receive extra financial support from the government towards schooling costs. Although the College is multicultural and invites the enrolment of international exchange students and fosters a number of Sudanese refugees, the school has a predominance of students of Southern European heritage.

The historical origins of this non-systemic school, spanning over three hundred years, have a strong influence on the present day ethos and contribute to the unique characteristics of this school setting. Hearing the story of the founders of the schools and their mission is an integral part of the induction of new members into the community for teachers, students and parents. The vision for all the affiliated schools is clearly articulated and recorded in the original writings of the founders from which, amazingly, today's teachers can still draw inspiration. This well-articulated vision is characterised by Christian values, holistic development of students and a genuine concern for the poor. It is identified by its own adjective, 'Horizon' education, which is part of the discourse of community members in these schools. An Horizon Education sets the goal for teachers 'to touch the hearts of your pupils'. Taken from school documentation; the following principles describe the vision of a Horizon Education — principles that have been important from its very beginning in the 1600s .

- The curriculum is planned, overtly religious, inclusive, student-centred, practical, and contemporary and is to form the basis of effective citizenship.
- The religious ethos of the school is not to reside outside the activities of the school day, but to be integrated into the curriculum and every aspect of school life.

- That searching for meaning in life and development of a prayerful, reflective mind is an important student outcome.
- Staff members are to examine their own behaviour before challenging that of students.
- Example is to be the most effective teaching aide.

With Horizon schools in eighty countries, Horizon College derives its direction, strength and inspiration from this ideal. This mission underpins every purpose of the college and is part of the daily discourse of academic staff. Such a prominent shared vision develops a unique culture and very strong sense of community. Yet like all modern schools, Horizon is faced with the challenge of responding to the rapidly changing educational needs of young people in a fast moving world.

In the 1990s, the College experienced a decade of rapid growth and nearly doubled its enrolment due to the closure of a nearby school and the changing demographics of the local area. This necessitated significant building development and also placed pressure on services such as canteen, science laboratories, parking, office space and computing and technology facilities. The College has spacious well-maintained grounds but an enrolment of over a thousand students ensures the courtyards are heavily populated and noisy.

In 2005, in the South Australian educational sector that Horizon College is affiliated with, fifty percent of the teachers were over forty years of age and an overall twelve per cent were over 55. Historically, the college has had a very stable staff but the enrolment increase meant that there was a significant change in the constitution of the teaching staff as well as the management structure in the school. The employment strategy over this decade seemed to reflect a need to employ teachers familiar with the culture of a boys' Christian school but also there was an awareness of a need to diversify. The college adopted a policy to employ young teachers in an effort to maintain a uniform age distribution amongst staff and also to address the gender imbalance in a predominantly male staff.

One recently appointed teacher had just completed his final pre-service teaching experience with the College in Term Two and was employed as a classroom teacher to begin in Term Three. This contrasts with the longest serving teacher of thirty years who is teaching the children of his former students, highlighting the range in age and experience within the teaching staff. Even so, the staff of the College includes a significant number of experienced teachers. 'Experienced' is being defined, for the purposes of this study, as having taught for over twenty years. There are varying degrees of mobility evident in the career experiences of the teachers currently at Horizon College, with some of them having only taught in one school and others with experiences of temporary and contract employment.

Over the five years from 2001 to 2005, the College has experienced a period of considerable educational change, coinciding with the appointment of new Deputy of Curriculum to the Leadership Team. The following description of the characteristics of this change and the change process are based on my own experiences and knowledge as a Head of Department and classroom teacher in the College at the time, as well as a school document reviewing the change. This account has been verified as accurate by the four participants in the research and hence it forms a context for their later comments about their own experiences relating to this period of change.

The traditional teaching methods were challenged with teachers being required to understand the educational theories of Constructivism, Outcomes-based Education and Functional Literacy. This change required different teaching methods as well as altered curriculum design and school organisational structure. To offer more choice and variety to students, the Year 8 to 10 curricula were to be taught in units of ten weeks' duration, requiring considerable planning and curriculum writing by Heads of Department and classroom teachers over a short period of time. The changes in organisational structure affected the time spent by students in core subjects as well as the counselling and recording procedures, the assessment and reporting formats and resourcing.

From the initial presentation to teachers regarding the intention to change school structures and methodologies at the beginning of 2001, the change was fully implemented for the 2002 school year. While some changes were welcomed by the staff,

the process of the change and the short time frame of the implementation affected staff morale. The new curriculum structure, while supporting some welcomed improved teaching practices, also had unexpected consequences. Staff perceived that the ten week units interrupted the continuity of the teaching program, as well as the development of student-teacher relationships, and this caused an increasing sense of discontent amongst staff.

The Principal at that time, responded to the situation by seeking professional support and advice from external sources for the executive management of the school, the Leadership Team, and he also commissioned an independent review of the recent change process which involved a staff-elected teacher reference group (of which I was a member), three teacher focus groups and a questionnaire to all staff. The final report, a school document entitled 'Review of Curriculum Changes – Horizon College', was made available to staff on request. It revealed that the Principal 'made it clear from the outset that the review must create an opportunity for the staff to provide open and objective input in confidence to the external review facilitator', indicating the genuine desire to seek the opinions and concerns of staff.

This consultative process was welcomed by staff and some of the specific findings of the review are referred to in later discussion. In general, the review found that there had not been full staff support for the 'fast-moving project' and that there were 'serious flaws in both the upwards and downwards flow of information during the planning and implementations of the changes'. The report stated that 'many staff were not conversant with contemporary curriculum theory and practice' and that 'the assumptions that most staff were in a position to challenge or defend key assertions were probably misguided'.

Even after the developmental stage, the actual running of the new timetable affected staff energy levels; and despite the management presenting facts indicating that teaching time had not increased, teachers felt time-poor and were aware of the intensification of their work loads. The review report recognised that 'many staff felt that they were being short-changed and this definitely contributed to a decrease in morale and a lessening enthusiasm for the commitment needed to introduce effective curriculum change at the classroom level'.

This period coincided with an industrial work issue for private schools in South Australia. Unions were challenging the requirement of teachers in private schools to participate in extra-curriculum programs conducted out of school hours as part of their normal work commitment. Although the programs had been generally well supported by staff at Horizon College in the past, on this occasion, teachers strongly supported union action to make this participation voluntary. For the first time in the College history the school was closed due to industrial action relating to teachers' working conditions. In general the staff adopted a more industrial approach to their work issues, asking for written job descriptions and working more closely to 'rule'. The decline in the goodwill attitude of staff to workplace demands signalled a change of culture in the College.

The review of the educational changes of 2002 and 2003 at Horizon College, conveyed 'considerable negativity' from staff for what had occurred to that point. However, the survey section, entitled 'Looking Forward', provided a much more optimistic outlook. Possibly because of the review process itself, the staff responses indicated an implicit recognition that the management was 'doing its best to get things right'. As a result of the review and evaluation, a modified curriculum structure and timetable was developed in 2004, to be implemented in 2005.

This unsettling period of educational change was not anticipated at the outset of my study but greatly affected the dynamics of this school. It magnified the impact that the working context has on the nature of the teachers' work and ways of working. It highlighted teachers' personal, professional and industrial relationships with management and with each other. The decision making processes evident during this period of change have exposed issues of power and influence within the school. Such wide-spread school change confronted staff with issues relating to 'best practice', the goals of schooling, and the ethos and vision of the school. The work stories of the experienced teachers from this time have provided valuable insights into the ways these teachers perceived the change processes in the College and how they negotiated this period of rapid educational change in relation to their own work and the educational outcomes for students.

This information about the present context augments the knowledge from the teachers'

past experiences and their visions of future possibilities to inform us about the characteristics of school contexts which provide experienced teachers with the opportunities to remain motivated and engaged in their schools. The remainder of this chapter outlines the design and process of the research that was undertaken within this setting.

5.2 Identifying and Preparing Participants

In 2003 at Horizon College a Professional Review Coordinator was appointed to support staff in identifying and pursuing individual goals in professional development. The coordinator of this program offered an open invitation to those staff members with more than ten years teaching experience the opportunity to be involved in educational research that was to be conducted at the site over the following two years. Being involved in the research would require participants to generate an account of their career and life history and as such was consistent with the goals of the Professional Review program. Goodson (2001) identifies life history as a strategy for personal professional development and outlines the benefits for teachers. He claims that generating a life history creates space for teachers to reflect and encourages self-reflection, and that as a result, they benefit greatly from what they learn about schools, schooling and lived experience (p.73). Several staff approached the coordinator for more details and eventually four of the interested teachers approached me requesting further information about the nature and requirements of the research. A Plain Language Statement outlining the purpose of the study, its research agenda, its processes and a detailed description of participants' rights and responsibilities was provided. The statement also outlined the measures that would be taken to provide confidentiality, as well as the limitations of these measures in light of the nature of the research methods.

Some consideration was given to preparing these experienced teachers for the research experience. The intention was to create an intellectual space, while still at their work site, that fostered critical reflection. The four participants were about to embark on an exploration that would ask them to reflect deeply on their daily work and career histories. The critical approach would require more than a chronological job history, a recount of a recent experience or identification of immediate points of tension. The

experience was to be conducted at their worksite, during working hours by a close colleague in empathy with the challenges of their complex career and current issues in their work context. These non-threatening conditions should have ensured that the participants would not be intimidated by the experience, yet on the other hand, their relative comfort with the prospect of the research may not have fostered the reflective inquiry that is required to probe surface realities.

The first experience the participants undertook was a personality analysis, via a standard instrument administered by a trained counsellor. While this approach may appear incongruous to the qualitative research methodology, the outcomes were not made available to the researcher nor used as data for this research. The personality analysis report remained the property of the participants as the experience was only intended to raise the participants' self awareness of the way they interact with their social and professional context and provide a framework for personal critical reflection.

5.3 Interview Structure and Analysis of Data

To gather the work stories of the participants, a series of three semi-structured interviews were scheduled with each. These interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed and I also took notes. A written summary of the notes was provided to participants within a week and these were checked for accuracy and interpretation. These were mostly low level accounts of the interviews and required little discussion between the researcher and the participant. All data and research records were coded according to the participant to whom it related and were stored securely at the residence of the researcher. At the conclusion of all the interviews, the interviews were transcribed and the researcher prepared an overview and preliminary analysis of each, identifying factors which affected the engagement of the teachers with their schools and endeavouring to position these factors in a broader historical social context. As these were completed, the researcher met with each participant individually to discuss the analyses.

In contrast to the initial summaries, these accounts were interpretative and far more than a recount of the interviews. As the researcher and a colleague of the participants, I felt

some apprehension as I presented the first of these interpretations to each teacher. I am sure they felt as I did, that it was a defining moment in our relationship as co-researchers. I was unsure how this experience may affect our relationship as colleagues, as I was concerned that they may consider that my interpretations were judgemental or presenting a negative view of them as professionals. On the contrary, the participants often felt that I depicted them in a 'rosy' light and their subsequent contributions adjusted the interpretations to reflect a more balanced perspective. From that point on, the discussions regarding my interpretations were indeed both critical and reflective.

In general, the participants agreed with these analysed overviews but for all participants there seemed to be some minor points relating to the evidence that required some correction or qualification. In most of these instances, they felt I had placed too much significance on a particular experience. It was only on rare occasions that this altered evidence affected the analysis of the data. On many occasions the participants responded with recognition and sometimes surprise as they gained new awareness through my interpretations, with a common response being 'You know, I'd never thought of it like that before, but you're right'. Besides the small corrections, I was surprised by their ready confirmation of the analyses, and their acceptance of my interpretations of their very personal experiences. I wondered whether they may have accepted my interpretations, allowing me more authority as the researcher and/or as a more senior staff member. However, the participants had been very reflective and direct in their interviews and possibly my empathy for their context and our earlier open and reciprocal dialogue may have expedited their recognition of the emergent theory.

In the final stage of my analysis, I categorised the engagement factors that had emerged from the analyses of the career portraits of the four experienced teachers into common themes, comparing and contrasting the evidence from each, exploring the silences and contradictions as well as the commonalities and emerging patterns. The six major themes that I identified in the interview transcripts were Ethos and Shared Vision, Collegiality and Collaboration, Issues of Management, Students, Career Progression and Performance Indicators. Although not mutually exclusive, these six themes could then be related to the three human needs. The teachers' need for *Affiliation* was evident in

their stories relating to the two themes of Ethos and Shared Vision and Collegiality and Collaboration. Stories about Issues of Management and Students highlighted the teachers' need for *Influence* and Career Progression and Performance Indicators were most closely related to their need for *Achievement*.

I compiled a series of quotes from the transcripts that encapsulated details of the teachers' experience, beliefs or feelings for each of the six themes. I did not include the participants in this stage of the analysis. Combining the data from all four teachers raised concerns about privacy of information. Although the teachers may have known the identity of the other three participants, this was never public knowledge. All discussions between researcher and participant were private and no data from other participants were ever shared or referred to. These measures were taken as an ethical decision to protect, to some degree, the anonymity of the participants within the College.

All four teachers had made references that could be included in each theme. I chose what I considered to be the most succinct and powerful words. For other dialogue, which may have been wandering or disjointed but still contained important evidence, I chose to paraphrase and summarise the story in order to present it in my argument. The next stage of my analysis involved using the teachers' voices, the historical social context of the story and the relevant literature on the issue, in comparison and/or contrast, in order to make sense of the stories told about the reality of being a teacher. What emerged were the factors that over the twenty or more years of their teaching careers, served to engage or disengage these four experienced teachers in their schools. Finally, in identifying the significance of my findings, some more general implications for schools and educational policies were drawn from the particularities of these stories and the emerging factors of engagement.

5.4 Teacher Past, Teacher Present and Teacher Future

'The marks of a story are that a story has a past, a future, a present and a plot-line' (Connelly & Clandinin 1997, p.672). Grumet (1991) explains that through her research experiences in autobiographies, she considers that it is better to seek three separate narratives sorted into past experience, present situation and future images. Such multiple

accounts ‘splinter the dogmatism of a single tale’ and while they may undermine the authority of the narrator, they also free him or her from being ‘captured by the reflection provided in a single narrative’ (p.72). Hence in my efforts to obtain a detailed self-portrait from the teachers, I conducted three interviews focusing on the Teacher Past, Teacher Present and Teacher Future of each participant. Pomson (2004) maintains, however, that teacher career stories do not necessarily follow a narrative chronology but that career research features ‘never-ending stories where past, present and future are always brushing against each other’ (p.661). Although I organised the interviews set in three different time frames, the interview transcripts support Pomson’s view, as the teachers’ stories often incorporated where they had come from, where they currently stood and where they were heading. Pomson uses the phrase ‘career portraits’ (portrait being the word I choose when I first proposed my research) and suggests that careers should not be seen as moving forward but as a ‘construct which is reworked, layered or deepened’ (p.661).

Interestingly there was a marked difference in the tenor of the three interviews for all participants. This may have been due to the evolving relationships the teachers and I shared as co-researchers but I feel the difference was more related to the extent to which the content of the stories were shared experiences for the two of us. The Teacher Past was new knowledge to me as it was the story of the participants as young teachers who were strangers to me. The events and experiences of the career progression were topics that we as colleagues had never discussed. The stories told were detailed, as we had no shared memories of their past but the participants often relied on parallel or opposing features of our current work context to explain situations. Where they considered it appropriate to the story, participants provided detail about the ethos and demographics of the school and its community, the leadership style of management, school response to educational policy of the times and the personality and work habits of colleagues. It was also evident that we would often use workplace specific language to enhance my understanding of the contexts of their stories.

As the interviews progressed, the participants became increasingly aware that their experiences were important and valued by the researcher. They became empowered in

the story telling which created a sense of discovery for both of us as the participants themselves gained new understandings from the telling and discussion. As experienced professionals, the background information they provided was succinct, relevant and illuminating, indicated the teachers' motivations and their perceptions of the incidents.

The format of the second interview, Teacher Present, was structured with topics of discussion which I had proposed and, although the participants were asked for alternative suggestions, they offered none. It is possible that at this stage of the interview process, the participants realised that they would be allowed to control the direction of the discussion and saw no need to formalise the structure of the interview. They often deviated from topics to share stories they considered important or significant. It was as a result of one such deviation that the additional issue of gender differences was included, after it had emerged in the interview of one of the participants. The stories of the female teacher highlighted several issues that were clearly gender specific, relating to parenting, leave from employment, appropriate attire, staff relationships and student management. To investigate the male perspective of these issues, I encouraged the participants to consider gender differences during subsequent discussions. In addition, I searched for any previously overlooked data relating to gender differences while analysing transcriptions of earlier interviews.

In contrast to the first interview, the participants and I shared a lot of common knowledge about present experiences at the College. I believe this changed the nature of the stories told. Perceiving that I was living the same experiences, there seemed to be no need to discuss some of the biggest issues in public knowledge at the College and so the participants all tended to reflect on their personal perceptions or their privileged knowledge. Nevertheless our discussions were on a different level from our daily interchanges in the staffroom and in free periods. In daily interactions, participants shared stories about how the changes were affecting their classes and the individual students in them. They would explain how alterations to the school structure created such problems as some students having three science lessons in a six lesson day. The discussions during the interview, however, focussed more on broader educational concerns such as students' attitudes to learning, teacher-student relationships and the

impact on the nature of teachers' work. The interview responses were more 'big picture' considerations with statements about the participants' own interpretations and contained fewer stories of their specific lived experiences. This may have been because they considered I knew about these experiences already. On the other hand, by determining the five broad discussion topics of Educational Change, Professional Learning, Collegial Interaction, Stress and Enthusiasm for Teaching, I may have prompted more generalised perspectives. It may be, too, that the interviewees felt cautious about having specific personal details about their positioning in relation to recent developments in the school, being put in writing.

In the final interviews about the Teacher Future, participants were asked to imagine their work life and position in five years time. This was an opportunity to predict a future direction that would undoubtedly be based on their perceptions of and satisfaction with their current position and context. These interviews had a positive and somewhat fanciful feel. They were much shorter than the previous interviews and for most interviewees, it was evident that they had not thought about their future in any depth. However, there was a sense of closure as the portraits were completed, an affirmation that came with the whole picture of the journey and the satisfaction with the sense that had been made of it.

5.5 Personal Reflections

The final aspect of the research was recording individual reflections of joint participants in the experience of conducting the research. The participants were asked to write a short summary that described the experience of being involved in the research process. The guidelines for the response encouraged them to comment on emotional responses to the findings, the impact on our personal and professional relationships, and any effect the experience had on their perceptions of their career and their personal and professional identity. The reflection was completed by participants at least six months after the last discussion pertaining to the research. This delay was primarily due to the heavy work commitments of the teachers and the timing of a vacation period. However, this delay ensured that the responses provided an account of the full and lasting impact of the experience.

The original intention of this component of the research was to identify any impact that the reflective, practical experience of reviewing career progression, current work contexts and possible future directions may have on the perceptions and satisfactions of experienced teachers. In the actual conduct of the research this component became increasingly more significant as we, as participants, all experienced personal and professional impacts as a result of our involvement in the research which are discussed in depth in Chapter Ten.

5.6 Overview of the Process

The interviews were designed to investigate situations of lived reality in the work stories of experienced teachers. From accurate and authentic representations, the theory building process was initiated by the researcher who developed an alternative construction of the teachers' accounts. Through reciprocal dialogue between researcher and participant further analysis was undertaken in order to provide an accurate portrayal of the work life of the experienced teacher within the context of the historical, social and political forces that control teachers' work.

The analysis involved firstly identifying experiences from teachers' stories that signify engagement with or disengagement from the school context as these relate to theories of motivation in the workplace. Secondly the structures and forces that influence experienced teachers' work at the macro and micro level as well as the strategies that teachers adopt to resist the control over their work were identified. Finally consideration was given to the possibility of a more socially just work context for experienced teachers in light of the factors identified by the research.

Chapter Six: Portraits of Experienced Teachers

6.1 Introduction to the Four Participants

Four of my colleagues from Horizon College, with nearly a century of teaching experience between them, responded to the offer to be participants in my research. As a researcher I noted that they were neither in high anticipation nor showed any anxiety about the experience. They all had a cooperative demeanour and sense of mild curiosity and often replied to my effuse explanations about process and expectations with ‘That’s fine. You just let me know’.

The three male and one female participants whom I will call Simon, Richard, Thomas and Cleo, are predominately secondary school, classroom teachers and all, except Cleo, have, at some stage, held a middle management position of responsibility, which had no more than a 0.2 time allocation. All have taught in the school where the research is sited for at least five years.

6.2 Introduction to Simon

Simon entered the Interview Room with the same demeanour with which he had approached the whole research process to that point. His voice and posture said that he was relaxed, confident, trusting and mildly curious about the processes and possible outcomes of this research. Without notes, he began to give a fluid and cohesive account of his 23 year career and life journey (Simon, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003).

Simon is a Biology and Junior Science teacher whose term as Head of the Science Department finished during the period of this research study. He did not reapply for the position although encouraged to do so. Simon’s two children have attended the school and Simon is part of a jovial, predominantly male group that sit together in the staffroom and socialise periodically outside school.

Although Simon had not entered his tertiary studies with the intention nor vision of a vocation in teaching, within six months of his placement in a school he believed that he had something to offer. He said that at that early stage he felt that he had the ‘natural

teaching skills' and the interests and attitudes that would one day make him a good teacher. This was despite the fact that the context within which he was working was in some ways contrary to his personal and professional beliefs. The corporal punishment in use at that time was an indicator of the school's behavioural management policies and the teachers' attitudes towards the students and these were contrary to his beliefs.

I was going up to my upstairs Year 10 Science class, one of the teachers called me over and said 'This is a pretty rugged class and if you have any problems I am next door, just send them over to me'. I said, 'What would you be doing?' He opened up his bag and there's this huge strap - my eyes popped. .. In all our psychology and philosophy of education it was not something we discussed at all in our one-year in our Diploma of Education, so I wasn't very comfortable with it.

While Simon acknowledged that this initial experience certainly influenced both his early and fundamental attitudes to classroom control and student expectations, he remains proud of the fact that he did not ever resort to the common practices with which he felt uncomfortable. His conflict with the ethos, however, did not deter his belief in himself as a teacher nor his growing vision of the role he could play in the educational system.

When I came to the school over a decade ago, Simon had a reputation for his fair but strict discipline with very high standards of behaviour. He still has well ordered classrooms but has adopted a more relaxed approach in recent years, forming warm relationships with students who hold great respect for him. He accredits his shift in teaching style to two different life experiences – one as a father and the other after playing a role in middle management.

I think I became more of an understanding teacher. After having my own kids and noticing that children were far from perfect, my expectations changed and that made me a better teacher. It was a bit easier to get closer to the students and understand where they are coming from, which then meant they found lessons more enjoyable and your presence not so over-bearing. I also spent a lot of time going into leadership and doing administration and my teaching notes weren't really up to scratch so I thought the best thing to do is go back to basics, get your

teaching right. That is what you came into the profession for; it's what you really felt you were good at. I think that was a real turning point because it got the priorities right.

The facts described by Simon as well as his personal reflections highlight the inseparable integration of his personal and professional life. His decisions about his career progression are directly correlated with important personal experiences of getting married, having children and his emotional and financial stability at these stages. Dinham and Scott (2000) in exploring the effect that teaching has on family relationships, concluded that being a teacher had a positive effect on ones own children, despite other pressures and demands (p. 9). Similarly his personal development and the role he plays within his family unit have been affected and influenced by the traits he has cultivated in his developing teaching career.

You hear your own family saying, 'There goes the teacher in him again' and it has contributed to the way I am, even with my own children. Sometimes they don't like that but I say to them 'That's me. It's my journey and we can't do much about it. I will try to be understanding.'

Simon was acutely aware of this nexus and acknowledged that in the latter part of his career he regularly monitors the balance he is able to achieve in his life, always protecting his personal and family life as a priority.

A large part of Simon's self-esteem and confidence in teaching has been due to the numerous positions of responsibility that others have approached him to accept or apply for.

Probably the one thing that caused me to stay, was the fact that I was offered this job as a promotion, and it was almost a vote of confidence. With these sorts of things that keep coming your way, you do have a sense of achievement I suppose, rather than just teaching for twenty years. You do tend to have higher self-esteem whilst these things are coming in your direction.

These experiences have affirmed his belief that he has something to offer and have been timely throughout his career, leading him to a position where he is able to make

decisions about career choices based more on his preferences and wellbeing rather than status or the desire for promotion. In reflection Simon acknowledged the benefits of his experience in positions of responsibility, particularly in understanding human nature, politics and relational issues which exist in the school context. His choices in recent times to forego opportunities in middle management and shift his focus and energy to classroom teaching, have highlighted the students and his classroom experiences as the highest priorities in his vocation.

Simon considered that his professional learning was predominately sited within the context of the school, achieved through the interaction with his colleagues. He considered that taking more senior rather than junior classes, teaching contemporary topics or moving into any new or different subject areas were the most natural career progressions for teachers. Simon mentioned further study as a desirable possibility but acknowledged that he had not pursued these opportunities and hence doubted his convictions regarding its importance.

I started a Masters of Education. I remember even going to some tutes and some lectures but was at the time planning my wedding and I didn't find it interesting, the tutorials in particular seemed to drag on. I was looking at my watch, had other things to concern myself with, my private life and therefore I threw it in. I didn't give it a serious go and I have slight regrets that I didn't see that through but I never felt that qualifications are important to make me a better teacher. I don't think it has made any difference whatsoever. Study is more to do with personal achievement. It's more to do with your own self-esteem and that's all.

Interestingly Simon said that early in his career he would have chosen to study in his discipline area, while his mid-career study would have been in teaching and his more recent study in finance had been for personal growth. The biggest deterrent for Simon to undertake study in the field of education has been his perception that further study would have no significant influence on his career progression.

If Simon's journey has brought him to one point, it is a realisation about the importance of life balance.

To be very good at what we do, we need to get all facets of our lives in balance, if we don't, then most of them will suffer. When I say life balance, I'm talking about social aspects, family, health and employment. They all have to come together for you to be good in all of them.

Simon's open and reflective account of his experiences, career progression and growth paint the picture of a very cognisant, aware and balanced person. Frequent references by name to influential individuals throughout his story highlight the importance of key people as mentors to Simon on his career path. His direct and polished account, indicate he has explored these issues in depth and has made sense of his journey and is comfortable with his identity. While confident and self assured, Simon is comfortable with both his shortcomings and those of others. He believes that openness and communication do not act as a deterrent, but rather promote mutual respect in the workplace.

6.3 Introduction to Richard

Richard is a modest, unassuming man who jokingly thought that he would have nothing worthwhile to say in our journey through his career history. Yet a rich and colourful tapestry of experiences was woven as he recounted the events that led him to become and remain a teacher for nearly twenty years. In a professional discussion, Richard will never speak for the sake of hearing his own voice and his contributions are thoughtful and insightful. Therefore I should not have been surprised to learn for the first time, even though I had taught with him for several years, about his diverse career history and the teaching experiences that eventually brought Richard to our school. This was Richard's story but his reflective, non-prejudicial nature allowed him to give both a first and third person perspective, this stereovision giving his tale a sense of depth and veracity.

Richard is a Physics, Junior Science and Religious Education teacher. Over the term of the research, he applied for and was appointed as Head of Science, replacing Simon in that position and citing his research experience as one of the catalysts in seeking the role. Like Simon, Richard did not begin with teaching as his career goal. Richard acknowledged that his choices at tertiary level were influenced by his brother, his peers

and his own experience of secondary school culture.

I think the role of my brother, who has been successful in Engineering and in his career, was important, and I went to a school where everyone did Science and Mathematics and everyone went on and studied Engineering or Medicine or Law. I think about six or seven of us actually went to Uni and did Engineering in the first year, of whom probably none are engineers now. So, I think teaching wasn't really something that people went and studied from high school... I think I wanted to explore life, learn about life and then through personal circumstances, personal experiences, was drawn to teaching. That's good, rather than going straight from school, straight back to school, I think it's important to have a broader experience of life than that.

When Richard was choosing for the future, teaching, unlike other professions, was not promoted as a desirable vocational goal and yet he sees the benefit of his indirect path into his career. Beginning in Electrical Engineering, changing to Science then Geophysics, with no training in Education, Richard's first employment was in a country school for a term, under an 'Authority to Teach' agreement with an understanding that he would gain his teaching qualifications in the near future.

I was excited and looking forward to it... I was apprehensive, because I didn't know what I was really throwing myself into. It felt like I had not so long ago been at school, so just do what my teachers used to do and it will just all come together.

Fortunately the conditions under which he taught in this country appointment ensured he had a positive experience. Richard admits that he would have chosen Geophysics over a Teaching position if both opportunities had been offered initially but later when that offer came Richard's priorities had shifted.

Even while I was teaching, I was offered an interview to go for a Geophysics interview up somewhere in the mines, but I felt obligated to stay in this position. Even though it was only for a term, in my mind, I had a commitment to these kids. This other job may have been for the rest of my life, but at this point in my life, I said no. I had to fulfil my obligation to these kids. In hindsight I look back and

think, how ridiculous, in the scheme of a lifetime of working. The fact I was only there for one term; that was the only commitment they were making to me but my commitment to the kids was much bigger than that.

Even after such a short experience as a teacher and with no promise of continuance from the Education Department, Richard had a strong sense of commitment and duty to the students which overrode what may have been in his own best interests at the time. However a subsequent teaching job offer for the remainder of the year in another country school, afforded some affirmation for Richard as a teacher.

The Department offered me another job, so I must have done a reasonable job. I just felt privileged to have a job. I wasn't thinking it was an appointment for the rest of my life, I was thinking it was great they were giving me that opportunity at that point, without the teaching qualification and giving me a go, I suppose. I thought I was on a path although I didn't then go straight away and do the Grad. Dip. Ed. I went and worked at the Casino, so obviously I hadn't clicked a hundred per cent that's what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

Richard then spent some time working as a croupier and later in the Public Service until a need for job satisfaction and the disappointment over a missed promotion led him back to teaching. He returned to full time study to gain his teaching qualifications and this was significant commitment, working the 'grave-yard shift' to support himself. On completion he was offered another country position.

With respect to Richard's country teaching experiences, he spoke about his place within the teaching and wider community.

The community was very supportive there, made you feel welcome. They wanted you to be part of sporting teams. They wanted you to mix, more so than a lot of places I mentioned. There was also a bunch of younger teachers who visited each other, supported each other emotionally with being away from friends and family. The one downside of it is that you do lose contact with your friends in the city, and I did. Yet to come back very regularly, then you are going to lose contact with the community.

In a remote country school, Richard's working and living context become one and it was important for him to feel both social and professional affiliation with his community.

Naturally Richard's experiences of applying for promotion or new positions would be key components of his career evolution but he seemed to perceive them as more about appraising his development as a teacher and a chance to gain feedback on how his achievements and performance were rated or valued. After several years of country teaching, Richard applied for a job in a nearby, large country centre. He was disillusioned to think that, despite his country teaching service, he was overlooked and a teacher from Adelaide won the position.

The feeling that the State Education Department did not recognise his service was a trust and loyalty issue for Richard and was sufficient to cause him to seek employment in the private sector, a system where he already had some association. When unsuccessful in applying for various positions in the Catholic system, Richard yet again felt that there was little recognition for his country experiences.

After all this time working in the country and experiences of working with different groups that should count for something. In many ways, I felt like 'you hadn't really done anything.'

Richard felt that this reflected on the value of his professional experience and achievement. This disappointment was more significant than the regret at missing that particular placement.

Despite gaining qualifications in the area of counselling on returning to Adelaide, Richard abandoned this career shift after only two unsuccessful attempts to gain a position. Being offered positions of responsibility within his school, on the other hand, provided affirmation.

The Principal offered me lots of promotional positions which, in hindsight, were something I valued and enjoyed doing. I was Year 9 Coordinator for about two years, was Science Coordinator for two years and two terms, I was SACE Coordinator for one term, so she obviously thought I was OK.

Richard has undertaken several courses of study throughout his career and while proud of his numerous qualifications, he questions their benefits.

I have a Graduate Diploma in Counselling and a Masters in Catholic Education, but I have not felt that it's been a benefit to my career in terms the way management value it. What's the incentive then for people who do all that, except the personal challenge and personal updating of your knowledge?

The impact and the difference that Richard makes to students' lives are prominent in his valued memories.

I think lots of students have had a really strong impact on my life. I was looking at a mug in my cupboard the other day where students engraved a glass. I drank beer out of it and you don't think how those little memories hang around.

Richard's career decisions have hinged very strongly on the sense of achievement he has experienced through his positional status. Close affiliation to community and the impacts he has on the lives of his students are the most pivotal aspects of his vocation.

6.4 Introduction to Cleo

After quickly making some important arrangements in the first minutes of her one free period of the day, Cleo arrived for our interview, cradling an enormous, steaming cup of coffee, waving a single sheet of handwritten notes about her two decades of professional experience. At ease, as if this task were a natural part of her complex role as a teacher, she seemed willing to give her time to support me, yet she was confident that she had an important and valuable story to tell.

The depth and diversity of Cleo's story belies the fact that she has only taught in one college (Cleo, Teacher Past Interview, 6th August 2003). She has worked through the reign of four different Principals, a changing management in both personnel and structure, a rolling staff list, a rapidly growing and evolving student cohort and these changes run parallel to her own life's story as her own family forms and grows.

Cleo's cultural background and family influences have forged her professional identity

and sense of vocation, and in contrast to Simon and Richard she had chosen the teaching profession from an early age.

I started teaching at a Latvian School when I was still at high school, with a friend of mine, and I enjoyed it. I guess what I didn't know, is that it's genetic, my father taught when he was first a migrant and my grandfather was the principal of one of the state high schools and my aunty, my father's sister, was a music teacher and a conductor. How good is that? So I think, working with young kids at the time I was teaching kindergarten at a Latvian School, I enjoyed it and I enjoyed seeing kids develop.

The love of learning and the power of knowledge were instilled in Cleo through her strong family values and cultural upbringing.

I was always bought up with a thirst for knowledge and with my parents going through the war and having lost everything; the only thing they could never take from you was your knowledge.

To instil the love of learning and provide a good educational foundation are important teaching goals for Cleo who has high expectations of students and is intolerant of poor manners or disrespect for school rules. Her passion to share these values with her students is evident in the things that she draws pleasure and achievement from in her work.

The students whom I taught who are now teachers, here with us, Sam, Daniel, Damien, Greg, Anthony, Nicolle, I taught all of them, and I find it amazing to get that circle of life (it sounds like Disney), where those students actually wanted to become teachers themselves. You and other teachers were able to achieve something.

For Cleo, the continuance of the vocation to teach from amongst her own students is the highest sense of achievement in perpetuating the love of learning and the importance of sharing this with generations to come.

Cleo enjoyed teaching the Kindergarten children when she was a high school student and having chosen teaching as her career, her personal and professional life have

progressed, inextricably intertwined.

Almost the same age as the students I taught when I started, to being the same age as their mother now, has given me what feels like a lifetime of perspective with kids. I've often thought that I was a much better teacher after having children. It makes you realise how important what you do is.

Like Simon, her experiences as a parent changed her perceptions of her work. But managing a career and a family creates tensions in itself and this aspect was more evident in Cleo's story. Financial pressures, maternal feelings of guilt, the demanding nature of the work and the extra demands of the workplace cause conflict, particularly for women, when making career decisions.

Financially, I was forced to come back to work. So she was born in February and I was back for fourth term which I was not happy about and I was given quite a heavy load when I got back because the Headmaster at the time didn't believe that mothers should work. I was given senior classes and expected to turn up to all of the extra-curricular nights and I was given sport.

Cleo is the only participant not to have a position of responsibility but it is evident that she has marked her career progression with the different courses and levels she has taught. Even as a beginning teacher her goals were set in the classroom, aspiring to Year 12 classes and inspiring students with a love of learning.

My interest was in getting kids fired up about my subject areas. As a student, I had a fabulous Ancient History and Modern History experience, with teachers who were really motivated. That was something that I wanted to do, to get kids loving subjects enough that they wanted to do them whether it gave them a fabulous score for entrance in Uni or whatever else, but just because they really enjoy it.

Although a Drama specialist, she has taught in a wide range of Arts and Humanities areas, even some she had not formal training in.

There was Art and then I did some Year 10 Design and I thought that showed a lot of confidence from the Senior at the time. I hadn't trained in those subjects, but I

had done Art to Year 12 and that really expanded, not just my knowledge and how to deal with kids but my methodology had to change.

Although Cleo is a well respected effective teacher, her current status belies some significant negative experiences with management that have permeated her entire teaching career. While some instances were shared over the duration of the interviews, the full extent of her negative experiences with management and the severity of the experiences and their long term impact were only made clear the very last time that we met. The delay in finalising her provisional registration, dissention over her assessment of a student teacher, lack of consultation for her relocation to a Junior campus and management of her Work-cover after a fall at work, have been negative experiences with management and management personnel that still affect her emotionally in the retelling. These episodes created tension for Cleo in her work place, destroying trust, causing her to feel defensive and lowering her self-esteem.

Collegial support was crucial during these early times and still played an important role in conflicts with management that Cleo experienced later in her career. She believes that because of some of the incidents that have occurred in the school in the past, the staff have become more outspoken and ‘will rally around and support the person when they think something unfair is happening’ (Cleo, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003). However there were more systemic supports such as harassment policies and protocols available to her in recent times as well and Cleo believes that these changes make it ‘a stronger place’.

Despite these experiences Cleo remained in teaching and in fact at the same school and survived after twenty years to still hold a clear vision and strong commitment. Cleo never voiced a desire to seek a position of responsibility even though she displays leadership qualities in her role in the Social Committee and within her faculty.

Finally Cleo continued to identify her role as a teacher in the importance of socialising students.

I would like to think that it’s not just the classroom learning but the whole business of old fashioned manners and being courteous and all the rest of it that

comes into it as well. A lot of kids these days are not parented, whether Mum and Dad aren't there, or one's there or they just don't care, whatever, they don't learn any social norms.

To impart standards of behaviour and decency is fundamental to Cleo's perception of her professional responsibility to her students. She clearly has a strong sense of mission and vocation that firms her resolve to expect high standards and offer the best opportunities to students in their academic and social development. She has become a respected teacher who is energetic, dependable, efficient, creative and effective.

6.5 Introduction to Thomas

Through the history of Thomas's 29 year career runs the dominant thread of his care and concern for the challenged, troubled or disadvantaged child (Thomas, Teacher Past Interview, 31st August 2003). While Thomas has not worked formally in adaptive education, he identifies these needy children in his everyday classroom and pastoral groups, looking beyond their alienating behaviours or practised invisibility to provide support and understanding. His first teaching practice in the New Zealand educational system was a formative experience.

I started to form my ideas. A class I had was a real, real bottom group, in that class out of fifty kids about twelve of them came from broken homes. I started thinking of what the kids go through and that what causes them to be poor learners.

Soon after qualifying as a teacher, he found himself being offered numerous jobs which provided a great sense of job security but also heightened self and professional esteem. Thomas accepted the job based on both proximity to his wife's work and also his familiarity with the reputation of the school. After five years Thomas changed location and again, when given a choice, chose the 'harder school' with the 'less able students' (Thomas, Past Interview, 31st August, 2003). Thomas had known the principal of the school he rejected, from sporting exchanges, and felt him to be unethical. The ethos of the school and its management were paramount factors when Thomas selected his work site — a less desirable location with quality management.

Thomas experienced some success in these early years of his career, improving teaching practices and being part of the development of innovative educational programs.

I did not use a text book. You couldn't drive them by text book. They had difficulties and that's where I became involved in an alternative Maths program called the New Zealand Certificate of Maths that was administered through the local Maths Associations. I believed in that type of Maths. I've always believed in working with those sorts of kids, making sure the program fits the kids.

After he had been teaching for eight years, Thomas had his first experience of having to apply and be interviewed for a position when he sought the Head of Department role at another school. As a child centred teacher, Thomas was keen to explain his motivation for seeking the promotion.

Other people suggested I should try for the Head of Department role. It wasn't any drive for personal gain, when I think about it. I went after the job rather than after the glory, so that makes the difference.

While in this role as Head of Mathematics and Computing, Thomas improved the computing achievements for the Polynesian students, particularly girls and initiated a system of intermediate level certificates that encouraged students to achieve in Mathematics. Thomas recognised that this was an extremely positive stage of his career progression possibly contrasting to times ahead.

Thomas's relocation to Australia, following his wife's work, found him working at Horizon College where the perceived culture was conflicting with his own beliefs about education and the nature of teachers' work. He experienced what he described as 'a time warp' in both curriculum and methodology. Thomas felt the students were 'spoon-fed' with the hope that they would remember enough to pass. Thomas felt that lower expectations by other teachers and less demanding assessment tasks led to poor preparation for students. Thomas's failure to adopt these methods caused dissatisfaction amongst students and eventually within management.

Nevertheless when there was a change in leadership structure, Thomas gained the role of Head of Department in Mathematics, with the previous Head not reapplying for personal

reasons. Thomas did not always feel supported in this role, partially due to the previous Head causing some disruption and the management's reaction to the conflicts arising from the comparisons between classes as well as the lack of supporting qualified teachers in his faculty.

Dissatisfactions, pressures and tensions led to a reorganisation of Thomas's career direction toward pastoral responsibilities and a possible alternative placement at a different school for a year also failed to eventuate. This heralded a period peppered with a serious of unfortunate events that were damaging to Thomas's professional identity and he became aware of a shift in management's opinion of his effectiveness as a teacher. He told of being called into the office to discuss some of the dissatisfaction that had been expressed by his students and Thomas recalled that for the remainder of the term at 'any chance he had, he (the deputy) picked'. Thomas felt that he had gone from being a successful, respected teacher to being 'ravaged at every opportunity' (Thomas, Teacher Present, 1st October, 2003).

Whether through management staffing choices or Thomas's desire to escape the judgements that had been placed on him in senior classes, he found himself teaching in mostly junior classes when an unfortunate car accident caused him considerable health problems that interfered with the continuity of his teaching. The nature of teachers' work does not allow for flexibility in teacher attendance and hence a strong sense of accountability for classes, led Thomas to a decision to take extended leave and in sense gain some control of this situation. Thomas returned part-time and over the next few years struggled to stabilise his condition and this, combined with his recent negative experiences with management, kept him teaching only junior classes.

It would not be fair to the kids, but I suppose in some ways in the back of my mind also, there would be no hassles with management. I can't say that hadn't crossed my mind, but that wasn't my primary concern. I had already organized that I was going to take six months off to travel, so I brought it forward, six months basically. That was good, it gave me plenty of time to think and whatever else and I sorted myself out pretty well.

On return from leave, Thomas took a valuable role both academically and pastorally

with junior classes, still teaching Mathematics but also Science, Religious Education and Geography. He re-established himself in a new role and with this combined with personnel changes in management, his professional life has stabilised. He reflected on this turbulent time as one where he ‘felt out of control for a while’. Thomas felt however that the structures that have been put in place in the school since that time would ensure that things would be dealt with differently. It was his understanding that at the current time, such situations would be dealt with by the Head of Department at middle management level and that if he felt harassed in any way, there would be protocols and designated personnel that would support him.

In the forthcoming year, Thomas will be the school’s key teacher in a national project piloting materials and approaches to promote excellence in the teaching of Mathematics. He leads a small team with enthusiasm and the ultimate goal to improve outcomes for his students.

Like Cleo, Thomas has survived a challenging period of performance management in his career which belies the teaching success and effectiveness that he enjoys in his current role in the same context. While still managing his health problems, Thomas remains a valued and well respected teacher in our community with an ability to connect with our most challenged students. His history is scattered with experiences that have at times highly motivated and engaged him and at others, caused him to draw back to reassess but always the students remain his prime focus and he upholds his moral purpose to make a difference in their lives.

6.6 Summary

These stories paint quite different portraits of four teachers, whose unique career evolutions have chiselled out the features of dedicated educators, each with their social and professional profiles entwined and indistinguishable. Now framed in the same work context, they are portraits with the same theme, ‘Dedicated to improving the futures for children in their care’.

Chapter Seven: Research Findings – Affiliation

7.1 Introduction

Through the stories of past, present and future of the four teachers, there emerged some common threads relating to work satisfaction, motivation and commitment that had forged their professional identities and perceptions of their place in the system. The rich data collected through the interviews with the participants were analysed to identify six central themes— Ethos and Shared Vision, Collegiality and Collaboration, Students and Issues of Management, Career Progression, Performance Indicators. As the central themes were common to all participants, they are identified as important factors in the context of teachers' work. It is to be expected then that these factors figure prominently in engaging these teachers with their work but are also evident in their negative career experiences.

These themes were then classified as relating principally to one of the three key higher order human needs; *affiliation*, *achievement* and *influence* that were identified in 2.1 Theories of Motivation Relevant to the Workplace, as essential considerations in the engagement of teachers in their schools. This chapter discusses the themes of Ethos and Shared Vision and Collegiality and Collaboration as they relate to the four teachers' human need for *affiliation* in their work context.

The following account is my construction as the researcher, weaving the individuals' voices into a collective response. The specific past histories and experiences or possibly the gender or character of the participants are often relevant to the interpretation of the data and so I have recognised the voice of the teacher so that a fuller interpretation of the data is possible. As an experienced teacher myself, I have also included my story and my voice to the data, as a fifth participant and reflective researcher. When appropriate I have added my own responses, in italics, to the voices of the teacher participants.

7.2 Teachers' Affiliation Needs in the Workplace

Because teaching is an intensely relational and interactive activity, *affiliation* is a very

strong motivator for teachers. *Affiliation* needs are the human needs for social acceptance, of belonging. In a school, teachers seek a strong professional association and alignment with values and purposes of their work context, in what Evans (2001) describes as ‘a good match’ between individual and institution. The individuals have a general acceptance of, rather than strategic compliance with institutional policy and practice in ‘an “uncompromising context” — a work context that does not require individuals to compromise their ideologies’ (p. 301). The pursuit of a sense of *affiliation* was evident in the stories of the teachers at all stages of their career but particularly in the later years. The ethos and vision of a school context was important for all four teachers when choosing or changing their workplace location, as well as having an influence on their work satisfaction and morale.

7.3 Ethos and Shared Vision

7.3.1 Choosing a School Context

Early career experiences indicate that the first priority for beginning teachers is obtaining a position in a school with a preferred location. Simon acknowledges that he chose the city over a country placement despite feeling more aligned with the culture of the rural school.

There was a big difference between the two schools, evident from only the two or three weeks I spent at the community college where there was a really nice environment — compared to what I would call an ultra disciplined environment.

(Simon, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

Thomas and Simon both experienced ethical conflict with the behavioural management practices of their first placements but being inexperienced, lacking influence and needing job security they had to reach a compromise. These experiences are illustrations of the warning Dinham (1996) makes about the pressures put on young teachers to conform to the prevailing ethos in schools. His claim is that these experiences will become more common with greater numbers of older teachers in schools.

As a beginning teacher in his new school, Simon received an offer of support in classroom management from an established teacher in the school. The teacher suggested that Simon send any difficult students to his classroom to be dealt.

He opened up his bag and there's this huge strap - my eyes popped.

(Simon, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

The evidence of corporal punishment was an indicator of the behavioural management policies, attitudes towards the students and educational practices that Simon found difficult to support. While Simon did not adopt the use of the strap, he acknowledges that the culture of the school influenced his approach to classroom management.

I wasn't very comfortable with it at all but some of the people that I worked with also doing the same thing and so it was an environment where you had to acclimatize and actually be very, very firm. I am still proud of saying I never actually used the strap but I guess some of the disciplinary techniques that I developed, very much, came from that mould of very high expectations.

(Simon, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

At Thomas's first appointment there was also a culture of corporal punishment as a behavioural management strategy which he found to be both ineffective and contrary to his personal values.

That was the ethos of the school and I did that for the first year and a half I think. It wasn't my scene, but it was part of the discipline of the school and I soon worked out that it didn't have any effect at all on the kids, in fact they were going around with notches on their belts.

(Thomas, Teacher Past Interview, 31st August 2003)

These stories from my contemporaries horrified me. I had witnessed and in fact experienced corporal punishment in my own school days but I had never been aware of its use during my own career in teaching. My reaction at the time was one of surprise at the somewhat passive reaction of two teachers who I knew to be very passionate about child protection. This was the first time as a researcher that

I began to realise that the central characters in these stories were not my colleagues of the present and that by listening carefully, I might be able to follow, in some way, the formation of the experienced teacher I knew.

As their careers progressed, the ethos of their work context became more important and they sought more control over it. For Simon there was an opportunity through collegial support to change the culture of the school (Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003).

One of the deputies had a completely different approach with the students and it was just as successful. We were getting into a change of an era although it took four or five years. We started to look at the psychology of the student and management policies which didn't revolve around violence. I had a small role. I mean, at the time the school employed between ten and fifteen new teachers. It was a growing school and we had an influx of quite a few new, very, very capable people and again this particular deputy played a part in selecting them. I think the school went through a really good phase.

Dinham's (1996) fears are that under the pressure to conform, as is evident in the early stories, the young teachers will not act as change agents. Simon's use of the personal pronoun 'we' is an indicator of his ownership of, and engagement with the eventual shift in culture. Simon was supportive of, if not the initiator, of the change. It was clearly a slow process and was dependent on both some level of support and drive from the school's management as well as a significant influx of new personnel. This supports in some way, Senge's suggestions in his conversation with O'Neil (1995) that the only way for innovation to endure in a stratified system such as education, is for people from more than one level of that system to work together.

Rather than try to change the culture of a school, it is more common for teachers to be more selective of their new workplaces as their careers progress. Teachers used a variety of ways to determine their alignment with prospective new employers.

I had spoken to some people and the school has a very good reputation and I thought I would like to be part of that. I looked on the Internet site and I read the ethos (sic) and thought it fits well with what I think about education and schooling. So I applied for it, and then I got an interview, felt very comfortable in

the interview ... and I thought I'd have a go.

Simon sought information about both the espoused and perceived ethos of the College. He gained an understanding of the College vision from documentation, its reputation from hearsay and more direct impressions from the interview with management. In most job interviews where teachers eventually accepted the position, they talked of being comfortable and relaxed, indicating that they anticipated mutual respect, acceptance and shared vision. Richard recalled the positive experience of a successful interview (Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003).

I went down to the interview and talked to the principal and other people there, and they made me feel very relaxed and welcome and I was lucky enough to get that position. I was there for five years ... I really enjoyed the community there. I felt very much part of a special community, and I think that the spirit was alive and well, awareness of the value if each individual and of each person on the staff.

In this instance, *affiliation* was a very strong motivator for the teacher who became strongly engaged with his career at this time, primarily due to the ethos of this school context that valued and respected the individual in the community.

Simon's move to Horizon, a school with a well-articulated vision, was seen as a positive career move (Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003).

I found the teachers here were very professional, probably a bigger tradition, a tradition at least more visible ... I really did consider after a short time here this was certainly a step up.

I came to the College not long after Simon and remember becoming aware of the tradition and professionalism that pervaded the school. The ethos and vision of this college were founded not just in a religious affiliation but also an educational heritage dating back three centuries. I had worked for nearly a decade in public schools with some inspiring educators but the commitment to the vocation of teaching in this school seemed to belong to the institution and community rather than dedicated individuals. The clearly and frequently articulated vision of the College validated my own moral purpose in teaching and so I felt like I had

jumped on board a train that was going in the right direction.

To find a work place where the vision is strongly articulated and consistent with one's own, is both engaging and inspiring. There is still likely to be conflict, however, in the practical embodiment of that vision which then causes a dilemma for teachers.

7.3.2 Conflict in Realising the Vision

Thomas was proud of being appointed to a new position at Horizon without a face to face interview but perhaps this did not allow him the opportunity to review the operations and ethos of his new school (Thomas, Teacher Past Interview, 31st August 2003).

In New Zealand, you were a group of teachers, most agreed that the students had a responsibility towards learning. We were there as mentors to guide them through and their future very much depended on how they worked, whereas here, you spoon fed the kids and hoped they would remember some of it, enough to pass. I think here, the Head of Department was running out of steam and it was expected that you know what to do, get on and do it which I did in the end.

Thomas perceived this culture to be conflicting with his own beliefs about education and the nature of teachers' work and ways of working together.

The students would say, 'How come this other class have all these notes and we are doing badly because we're in your class'. I never got personal with it, degrading other teachers but I have some disappointment that I didn't take a younger teacher on board at that particular time.

Thomas has regrets that although he handled the disparity in methodologies in a professional manner in discussion with the students, he did not come to collaborative alignment with his colleagues. There was no evidence of open communication between Thomas, his Head of Department and school management, and the absence of professional dialogue to resolve this disparity led to conflict which had significant consequences for Thomas in his workplace.

Yes, I had a few arguments with the Head of Department about how we should be

teaching. That was in the year the classes were taken off (sic) me.

Evans (2001) states that teachers may feel that they work in a 'compromising context' when the educational provision reflects views dissonant to their own but it was more significant if it placed constraints on their own practice (p. 301). Thomas felt that lower expectations by other teachers and less demanding assessment tasks led to poor preparation for the students and Thomas's failure to adopt these methods caused dissatisfaction amongst students and eventually within management. Assumptions were made about Thomas's performance from the perspective of the College's established effective teaching methodologies. While Thomas shared the College's vision for student success, there was resistance to his different approach to achieving that goal. Richard also explains how he had to adapt his teaching methods to conform with Horizon's culture (Richard, Teacher Present Interview, 2nd October 2003).

I had to change the way I teach. I cannot teach as well, it is more chalk and talk. The kids will sit and write happily, and then they don't tend to muck around. If you try to do any things a bit creative or a bit different, the noise builds up too much. People sort of stare. It just becomes impossible to work in the environment and the kids tend to muck around more, so you learn strategies that will keep them quiet and work, which I don't think necessarily are better learning or teaching strategies.

Although I was a teacher with ten years' experience when I came to the College, I found there were some challenges in establishing discipline in this regimented and quite traditional boys' school. I, too, recall having to adapt the way I taught. I felt a strong association with the educational visions of the College and its staff but in reality my teaching style was more progressive and not commonplace in the school. I accepted that the changes were necessary for me to establish myself in a new school both in the eyes of the students and the teachers. Over time I have been able to create a more progressive learning environment both in my classroom and throughout my department.

Entering a school where a common teaching methodology prevailed in most classrooms, such as Horizon was at that time, caused some conflict for these teachers. There is some evidence in these stories that these teachers, each of whom has taught for at least ten

years, experienced some pressure to conform with existing practices. The College certainly had the shared vision which is one characteristic of a Professional Learning Community, as described in Chapter Three as a desirable work context for teachers, but such a community would have a more collaborative, investigative approach to teaching and learning challenges. Johnson (2004) highlights that school alignment on key learning purposes and processes can still allow for diverse action by teachers within an area of inquiry and hence safeguard teacher professionalism. These teachers did not feel school tolerance or support for diverse practices.

The current context for these experienced teachers has a well-articulated and shared vision of child-centred education based on the founding principles of the College. This ethos permeates the culture of the college community underpinning all actions and decisions. It features in the professional discourse of teachers and meets the basic human need for *affiliation*. This promotes a strong engagement of individuals with their community but when there is conflict in the articulation or interpretation of this shared vision, community members experience significant stress. For example, applying the College's child-centred principles to behavioural management policies causes some dissent between teachers, and between teachers and management. Cleo expressed what she feels are some of the conflicts faced by teachers at Horizon College (Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003).

We have great deal of trouble dealing with students because of our philosophical heritage, giving them too many chances to fail, where sometimes the firmer approach causing students to see the result of their actions would certainly be more effective. In the classroom situation, teaching students who have got away with a lot over the years is incredibly stressful.

Some teachers at the College feel that tolerance towards the most challenging students becomes detrimental to the others and threatens the effectiveness of their teaching. Now the care for one child begins to compromise the learning of others as well as the goals of the teacher. This raises an ethical debate for the College. As well as threatening the commitment to 'shared vision' there are the practical difficulties and associated stress of managing a student's difficult behaviour.

For teachers performing what they see as their duty, there can be some perceived contradictions between the strong ethos of the College and some of the priorities. Cleo recalled one such experience:

Administration (management) would be out there when the bell went to see if you were late, even though you may have been counselling a student. It was very important that those three minutes be given to that one student, even if it meant you were two minutes late for the next lesson, but you'd be asked why you were late. I think if we are really talking about the whole school tradition and caring about individuals, then there needs to be flexibility. Create an atmosphere where people are able to do their work but feel that if they make a mistake, that it's human.

Whether the need to adhere to the College's rules of order should be a higher priority than caring for the individual needs of the student is tested in such a situation. Whether this conflict is resolved depends on the effective communication between community members. Cleo perceived that a judgement had been made on her decision to tend to the needs of the child. Possibly the acknowledgement of both the dilemma that Cleo faced and the validity of her final choice was not articulated to her. This left her with the feeling that she was judged unfairly, a situation which rises from lack of communication and more particularly a sense of insecurity in the trust that management have of her professional judgement. These teachers have a belief that the strong ethos underpinning the purposes and practices of the College, should be afforded not just to the pupils in their care, but to the teachers themselves as members of this community.

This College has a strong educational heritage and a religious foundation. Some teachers, despite not being of the same religious denomination, were appointed to the College under the condition that they could support the Christian purpose of the school. While it did not appear to greatly affect their affiliation with the community there were isolated incidents that arose. Cleo related one such incident (Cleo, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003).

The RE (Religious Education) had only lasted one term; it was a unit on Drugs and Alcohol, and they never asked me to do it again. I was really wondering about

that. It was a case of most of the pastoral care teachers were teaching RE, but they're all the right denomination and I was another. I think I was given the class to fill a hole. I never actually investigated whether it was because someone was on Long Service Leave or anything but it was really strange to get one term. I thoroughly enjoyed it and probably bought more life experience than they wanted, into some areas. I think perhaps sometimes the teachers who teach those subjects, do hold themselves back and work from books but we did a lot of group work. We got stuck into the pros and cons and the dangers and I think perhaps it wasn't the approach that they had wanted but no one ever spoke to me about it. I had done RE at College. I had done quite a few units as my electives and I had done the compulsory ones at North Adelaide, so I had all of that background.

While Cleo was still confident that the learning experiences and methods that she employed with this class were both meaningful and appropriate, she questioned her alignment with the management, possibly due to differing religious affiliations. She was unclear as to why she was given the class initially but having the class for an unusually short time made her feel as if there was some displeasure with her performance even though this had not been directly communicated to her. She reassured herself that she had the appropriate qualifications, but possibly interpreted this experience as evidence of a lack of alignment in vision and belief between herself and the College. This disjunction prevails in her memory as it remained unresolved due a lack of honest and open communication between Cleo and management personnel although the incident itself was not a major personal conflict for her. The story was told in a light-hearted manner as a curiosity rather than significant experience.

Simon, also of a different religious affiliation, reflects on how this affected his career ambitions (Simon, Teacher Future Interview, 29th February 2004).

Even in the early days, it was quite apparent that you could only go so far, and I don't think you did dream to aspire to the principal's job. The whole religious ethos in the College, whether it was by spoken word or not, would be seen to be supported more by someone who's of that denomination, than someone who's not.

While the fundamental ethos of the College supplies a strong, shared vision for all

community members it also creates some inherent, widely accepted limitations on the advancement of employees. At one point, Simon decided to pursue a path that he felt was appropriate to his own career progression, yet his ambitions were checked by a perceived religious bias.

I applied for a deputy's role actually, and then after I finished doing it, got all the necessities, references, referee including religious references, I realised that I was barking up the wrong tree. Personally, I thought it was the right direction, because I had been teaching for a while, but I just felt that it wasn't going to be achievable, given my religious background.

Well aware that he could have chosen to leave the system to further advance, he admits to being 'too comfortable' to leave the College.

For both Cleo and Simon, there is a passive acceptance of this misalignment due to the religious foundations of the College that are integral to the College's purpose and which they were aware of when they chose to teach at the school. They accept these discrepancies as they do not compromise the values associated with their teaching vocation. There is no further evidence that their differing religious denomination in any way dissociates them from the college community and hence does not threaten their need for *affiliation*.

Being also of a different religious denomination, my own experience as an employee of the College is that of faith tolerance with inclusive worship and reflection focussing on spirituality rather than religious affiliation.

7.3.3 Issues of Gender Equity

Misalignment with broader social and cultural values can also alienate teachers from their work context. The College was traditionally a boys' school with predominant male staff. When Cleo first came to the College she was one of three female teachers on staff. There has been a deliberate employment strategy over the last decade to gain a gender balance amongst teaching staff. This balance has not been achieved in positions of responsibility, with the first woman to be appointed to a school management position in 2006. Those teachers new to the College are particularly aware of gender issues. Having

had experiences in different types of schools, Richard is aware of the lack of gender balance in the management positions of the College.

I've come from an all girls' school, so a family of women and girls and staff. Young women in leadership roles were very much a part of that culture.

(Richard, Teacher Present Interview, 2nd October 2003)

Another woman was appointed as Year 11 Coordinator when I was made Head of Mathematics in 1994 as the only women in leadership positions at that time. Although unrelated to our roles, we were often called upon to assist with gender specific issues relating to girls and women in the school due to the lack of female representation in management. I believed that feminine leadership styles were not considered appropriate for deputy and principal positions in the College at that time.

Thomas has observed a difference between the rhetoric and reality of gender equality.

With management, the words were spoken about equality but the actions didn't seem to always match that in terms of appointing senior female staff. There were times when females should have been appointed and they were grudgingly appointed or not appointed at all, or if they were appointed they were not treated the same way. It's good now having you as a woman as a Head of Department in terms of a female in a male's world which it still is in some ways.

(Thomas, Teacher Present Interview, 26th October 2003)

I was surprised to hear Thomas and Richard acknowledge the gender issues relating to promotion in the College because although it is discussed openly amongst women employees it is not commonly acknowledged in mixed gender groups. I was also affirmed by Thomas's recognition and support of my position as a Head of Department. When I first accepted the position, I was the only female maths teacher in the college with twenty men, teachers in my faculty, and I certainly felt the pressure of the expectation to prove myself worthy of the position.

Regardless of the ethics which are espoused, it is the actions that indicate to teachers the

true values upheld in the College. Richard was aware of other differences in staff culture at what is predominantly a boys' school.

It's a very 'blokey' place, I'd say it is a pretty typical boys' school. Some of the men haven't caught up with the correct way of treating or talking about some issues. There's a tendency to make a joke of sexual issues. Most people do know what they are supposed and not supposed to do, but then they'll do it and they'll make a bit joke out of it. There is a bit of a culture with sexual harassment, 'I'm not getting enough' and really in a modern professional work-place that's not on. Unfortunately, someone is going to experience that and then it isn't a joke. I think it's important not to be flippant about issues like that.

(Richard, Teacher Present Interview, 2nd October 2003)

In this male-dominated context, there are perceived gender differences relating to teachers' issues of behavioural management. The comments from the male teachers recognise the problem.

I'm not quite sure that in some situations that the boys in the College actually respond very well in the presence of female teachers and I think they are getting a little better over time but certainly I suppose a few years back, when we had fewer female staff members, they really weren't too sure how to exactly act in the classroom.

(Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

As far as being a female teacher in the school, in terms of the way the students are treating you, I'm not sure about that. But our female teachers have to be pretty tough and straight down the line and probably can't give of their own personalities much. They probably have to be tougher than perhaps they would otherwise be, I don't know.

(Richard, Teacher Present Interview, 2nd October 2003)

Cleo confirms these opinions.

Most of our female staff to have survived here with teaching boys have had to be

fairly self confident and assertive. I don't think they would be considered shrinking violets.

(Cleo, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

One of the male teachers also shares the opinion that there are gender differences in the support offered to female teachers by management.

Male teachers still tend to look at female teachers who perhaps aren't doing so well, harsher than male teachers. There were female teachers here and the impression I got was they weren't given a lot of help but male teachers were seen to have been given not professional help and assistance, shall we say, guidance. Ken got himself into a bit of strife and he was sort of given a bit of assistance and guidelines and whatever else but the girls were basically thrown to the lions. It was just interesting; males opposed to females. I think there are some expectations, if you're a female teacher coming into a male school, then you've got to be able to deal with it. The male hierarchy don't seem to be able to help you to deal with it.

(Thomas, Teacher Present Interview, 26th October 2003)

I interpreted this 'strife' as student behavioural management issues. While none of the participants considered these difficulties to be signs of personal weakness, there are suggestions that other teachers in the College may.

While Cleo and I had had conversations about these issues in the past, I was surprised that all three male participants perceived similar gender inequities. I wondered why these perceptions had not been part of the staff's professional discourse on behavioural management. It was as if acknowledging the gender differences was being discriminatory.

While there are different expectations for women it seems there is insufficient understanding of, and no solutions to, the problems confronting the female teachers in this male-dominated environment. Cleo feels that role modelling by the staff is a first step to improving the situation.

I believe we are not modelling strongly enough. If the students see us friendly, joking but still respectful and polite etc. with each other, they will pick up on it and they will know that this is the way adults treat each other; they get along and they work well. I have given out detentions for Saturday morning and a male staff member said 'Don't worry about it. She's only a woman, I'll get you off', because that particular student was in the First XVIII Football team. So it's that kind of demeaning comment that spreads like wildfire, particularly amongst the students who are prone to that kind of behaviour.

(Cleo, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

There is also a strong historical culture of sporting achievement in the College and there is frequent dissent between community members concerning priorities between academic and procedural responsibilities and sporting commitments.

Another past gender issue that Cleo recalled was the inequitable dress code expectations for women and men. Even in the late 1980s, women teachers were not allowed to wear trousers at the College. Cleo felt a strong sense of *achievement* many years later in being instrumental in making trousers a part of the girls' winter uniform, an indication of her influence in changing school culture (Cleo, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003).

It took me nearly ten years to get girls' pants in, which is, I think, part of the struggle when we weren't meant to wear pants ourselves. I'm quite happy with that one; a sense of achievement. About 15, 16 years ago, Year 12 girls would stand there in their skirts, which back in the 1980s they (sic) were short, and their winter uniform was bobby socks, they were not allowed to wear tights. They weren't even allowed to wear skin coloured pantyhose to keep themselves warm and they would just shiver. I thought how absurd.

Cleo's story traces the changes in the workplace, the changes in culture as the College evolves to a more supportive and collaborative work environment which better typifies a Professional Learning Community.

I think the place has changed enough, in particular, it might sound strange, but this

year, a lot of the old taboos have been just erased, and it has happened in a few areas, I think that is very significant.

For me a significant indicator of culture shift was the election of a female college captain as the supreme student leader in the college in 2004. Openly heralded by staff members, the situation evoked some emotive discussion between the boys, airing some of the gender issues relating to the fact that girls are less than ten per cent of our student body and only join the college for Year 11 and 12. I agree with Cleo that there seems to have been a shift in the College culture.

During recent years, the College had been required to respond to a Commonwealth audit regarding gender equity in the workplace and this was an opportunity to prompt individual and collective consideration of some of these issues. This heightened awareness may have encouraged Cleo to have a more positive outlook for women's rights in the College. Certainly personnel changes in management and teaching staff, improved gender balance in staffing and leadership positions have challenged the traditionally masculine culture of the College.

7.4 Collegiality and Collaboration

Evans (2001) identified both interpersonal relations within a school context as well as collegiality with peers in work-related relationships as important features in an engaging and satisfying work context (p. 301) and this was supported in the stories of the four participants. As well as affiliation with the College as a work context, association with peers both socially and professionally was identified as a factor affecting the motivation of these teachers.

7.4.1 Social Interaction

When 'collegiality' was offered to the participants as a topic of discussion, they all interpreted it as the social and personal relationships they have with their colleagues. Common in the literature, collegiality is defined more widely, describing relationships that are more related to work outputs (Hargreaves, 1995; Little, 1992). The social aspect is not to be undervalued, however. Hargreaves (1995) identified moral support as one of

the important benefits of collaboration. Having a supportive group of friends in the workplace can meet teachers' human needs for both *affiliation* and *influence*.

Early career experiences highlight the relationships with other young teachers as having a dual purpose of social interaction and support and encouragement in their work as explained by Cleo (Cleo, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003).

In that same year we took on about eleven new staff ... and people I had been at College with were taken on, Paul and Steve and someone else, so there was a whole group of teachers who were roughly the same age and it made for a really fabulous sense of camaraderie. It was really great. We bounced off each other, socialized at school. Not so much outside at all, but all of us were put into Year 9 Pastoral, so there was a Year 9 Camp, it was just rolling activities. We were right into it. There was no one holding back. It was really great.

Cleo expressed an obvious sense of *affiliation* and engagement at that period of time, possibly based on the teachers' strong association due to their age similarity and newness to the job. This type of peer support was very important to Richard who had relocated to a country school (Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003).

There was a bunch of younger teachers who visited each other, supported each other emotionally with being away from friends and family.

In their present work context, the experienced teachers all acknowledged a rather special, supportive and accepting environment. Simon recognised that good staff relationships have been a feature of the College and that they had been maintained over a substantial period of time.

Given the fact that I've been here quite some time now, it's good to know that you can come in and still have a good laugh with fellow staff and I think that's one of the real strengths the school has at the moment. ... I'm really, really happy with the way some of the dynamics are on this staff because I think that there are some great things happening.

(Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

Cleo expressed some pride in the fact that the teachers new to the community are aware of the supportive culture and acknowledged that it was a feature that kept her at the College.

We have a staff that is incredibly open as is witness (sic) when we have student teachers or people on contract etc., very accepting. I don't see a lot of the staff socially, purely because of my own time restraints etc. but we are socially quite active both in the staff room and when we have our conference days etc. There is a lot of very quiet support, friendship, a lot of very close links forged there. It is one of the things that has actually kept me here all this time.

(Cleo, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

Ready support for teachers is an important aspect.

There's a lot of really good friendly people that always make you welcome if you want support, which is good. We have social functions where people go along together.

(Richard, Teacher Present Interview, 2nd October 2003)

The social nature of the staff is also fostered by the management of the school. Food is provided for staff at general staff meetings and all professional development and activities days. All College employees are invited to a fully paid Christmas dinner on the last day of school each year and tickets to school celebrations such as the Graduation Ball are supplied to staff members and their partners. The Staff Social Committee is active in funding many celebrations during and immediately after the school day, financed by monies donated by teachers from the payments they received for working with student teachers. These gratuitous events are not common in all South Australian schools but, as well as promoting social cohesion, they provide some reward and recognition to teachers for their work in the school.

This social cohesiveness exists despite a significant difference in the age of staff members in this school. For these experienced teachers there is a feeling of being respected by their peers with mutual collegial respect not being age-dependent.

There is no generation gap or age barrier. I see myself about the same age as some of the younger staff members, and they certainly don't treat me differently, even though I'm old enough to be their mother, and I see the older staff members as being my age, and I think that's the whole professionalism of it, that there is no age barrier.

(Cleo, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

The personally supportive nature of our work context is one feature that we all recognise and acknowledge. It is the first thing we would mention in describing our workplace and it is recognised by the new members of the community including teachers, students and parents when they come to Horizon. It may not be a perfect work place but the care and camaraderie amongst staff is something that survives and sometimes overshadows deficiencies and conflicts.

There is evidence of a very personable environment where generally people feel nurtured, supported and accepted by their peers. It is interesting that this culture exists in a context that has been described as a 'blokey place' as Hargreaves (1995) described moral support as being associated with women's way of working (p. 155). It may be attributed to the very strong religious and educational foundations that define the ethos of the College. Teachers' respect for individuals and care for the whole person in their relationships with other members of the community, are naturally extended to their colleagues.

While agreeing it to be generally very supportive, the participants have different perspectives of the social structure within the College.

For support, it is really important that you build relationships with colleagues. I found it a little bit more challenging in this school, because it is so big and there seem to be set groups of people. The staffroom has got four areas where we sit, and never venture from one area to another area, and there is quite a large proportion of people who never come into the staff room. ... but there are also quite a lot of groups of people that do things outside. They just get together which happens but often they'll make people aware of that, a juvenile thing. Still, I think the social aspect is still a positive part of this school.

(Richard, Teacher Present Interview, 2nd October 2003)

There are people whom I see socially. O.K., there are separate groups among the place but it's a free and open membership ... saying you can move from one to another with ease, and I do.

(Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

There are definitely four different seating areas in the staffroom at break times with some people comfortable to move between groups. However there are always open conversations as we gather in the kitchen area before being seated and often people choose to join different groups during professional gatherings and larger social occasions. I feel the seating arrangements are merely habit and convenience.

With over a hundred people on staff, it is difficult to form one unified social group as might be possible in smaller schools but in general there seems to be a high degree of camaraderie. This support serves differing purposes for the teachers.

We are, because of incidents that happened, very sensitive and aware within our own groups of what's happening and no longer do people put up with it. They are more vocal. They will say what they think. They will rally around and support the person when they think that something unfair is happening.

(Cleo, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

I will sit in a place in the staffroom where I don't have to talk about school, don't have to talk about classroom, I don't have to talk about students and there are people who I see socially.

(Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

For Cleo, collegiality offers consolation and affirmation while, for Simon, this decision to 'switch off' during break time may be part of his commitment to life balance which he believes is an antidote to stress. The type of social support needed depends on the individual and it appears that this diverse but accepting group can accommodate the differences.

7.4.2 Open Communication

One particular point worth further discussion emerged from Richard's story. His discussions about collegial interactions were very inclusive, not just referring to teaching staff but specifically mentioning his relationships with the Leadership Team, Middle Management, library, office, grounds, canteen, cleaning staff and of course lab assistants. Richard is very community-conscious in his workplace, which may be attributed to his formative teaching experiences in country communities and he values mutual respect and good relationships between stakeholders. A factor that has been disengaging in Richard's career relates to poor communication between colleagues. Reluctant to provide details about his experience, it was difficult to determine if this conflict was of a personal or professional nature. It was evident, however, from the dialogue below, that it had been a significant emotional experience for Richard and that he felt that the situation could have been better resolved.

I don't want to go into the nitty gritty detail because it relates to a particular person, but sometimes I think that I didn't interpret that person exactly the way they (sic) wanted ... because of poor communication of the person, it was because of vagueness, it was because of agendas that the person often had, that disenfranchised me from feeling good about my job. And if you look at it in the big picture, probably it's only a few small issues that weren't dealt with well enough in my opinion, never. It was quite obvious that I was very upset about it, but still there was no serious attempt to address it or talk about it properly.

(Richard, Teacher Present Interview, 2nd October 2003)

Although there is not a lot of detail on which to draw any conclusions, it is clear that the failure to resolve significant communication issues for this teacher in his workplace left a long lasting sense of frustration and injustice. Simon identified some crucial issues about communication between teachers that he encountered in his role as Head of Department. (Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

There were three or four of them and the thing I found was quite interesting was that they would come in, knock on the door, talk to me and tell me their problem for half to three-quarters of an hour and then they would move out — 5 minutes

would elapse and the next one would come in etc. etc. The thing I learnt was it was just so much easier if they sat around the table and damn well told themselves that instead of waiting for me to mediate.

Initially, Simon felt that listening was an important part of his role and that confidentiality and impartiality were important.

Now, at the time, what I should have done was come into a room like this and said, 'One, two, three — let's talk about it'. That's what I would do now and that's a huge learning experience — but at the time I didn't, it was a case of confidentiality. 'Let's listen to you and now let's listen to you'. I now understand where people are coming from. I don't particularly care if you know someone else might know what you're telling me because in many ways that helps solve the problem. The thing I did really learn about is, OK, maintain confidentiality but I think openness is crucial, absolutely crucial. If people have to say it and they want to say it about someone, I don't like saying it behind their back, say it to their face and we will work it through. If it means a group meeting, let me go with that.

Not having an open dialogue amongst staff causes stress not only for the people directly in conflict but everyone involved.

I didn't do that then and I think that took its toll. You virtually had people whingeing about others and in the end everyone finds out about it. I wasn't open as I should have been and then looking like I'm playing favourites with some, not with others. You tend to take it home; tend to think about it. You tend to throw it all up at times when you really need it least. It has an impact on how happy you are at home or how well you sleep and its all part of the stress factor.

Simon learnt a lot about mediating the interaction between staff members.

I have learnt so much more about people, just to be so much more open and to allow them to sort out some of their differences rather than being the person doing it. It has been so relaxing, it's just unbelievable. It's been a really good learning experience professionally. There is a difference between being interested in talking about people and the things they do and then being interested in helping people in a work environment. They're two different things. It's easy to talk, its

another thing to try and mediate.

As Simon spoke I was mindful of a formal interview I attended as Maths Coordinator, when Simon was the Faculty Head. Simon spoke to a young teacher about issues relating to his teaching performance and his difficulties with behavioural management. I noted the honest and direct way Simon spoke. His statements were factual and non-judgmental and none of us felt the awkwardness I had expected in such a situation. I learnt an important lesson about leadership that day which I have practiced ever since.

After enduring an uncharacteristic period of stress, Simon, like many experienced teachers, has developed his own simple strategy for conflict resolution. This story however highlights the importance for managers at all levels to have skills in personnel management. It also validates the importance that Senge (1993) places on openness in a learning organisation. He claims that openness is a characteristic of relationships and not individuals (p. 284). He believes that only by making a commitment to truth can we broaden our awareness and be able to recognise our coping strategies. Blaming others is a pattern of behaviour that stems from a belief that problems have external uncontrollable causes, rather than the ‘systemic thinking’ of recognising we are all trapped within the same structure. Older teachers are more experienced with hegemonic structures and may be more accepting that the structure of the system influences behaviours. This recognition can halt the knee-jerk reaction to find fault with others. You and your problems are part of a single system. There is no blame. Simon, for example, illustrated the benefits of strategies developed over his years of teaching.

I don’t think that I had the right strategies five, six or seven years ago. I think I was more very much down the line, very adamant and thinking, ‘he should not be doing that’ and now I sit back and say ‘he can’t help himself’. He was going through a pretty tough time himself. I can see where he was coming from now and why he was behaving like that. At the time, I couldn’t see that and I was getting angry. That’s the difference and now those sorts of things would not bother me.

The workplace and life experiences that these late-career teachers have developed over time have enabled them to facilitate open relationships between teachers in the College.

7.4.3 Professional Collaboration

Professional collaboration was one area where the teachers needed to be prompted to respond, possibly because it was a topic I selected for discussion. The participants' responses to this topic and their earlier stories were sometimes contradictory. At the time of this research the teachers were experiencing an extended, intensive period of curriculum change. Teachers were required to design and document new curricula and were also encouraged to make a methodological shift in their teaching and to work more collaboratively.

This period was an enactment of 'pseudo-participation and quasi-democracy' (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998, p. 23) characterised by rigid guidelines, where teachers are given time to collaborate concerning the implementation of imposed policy rather than making important decisions about teaching and learning. Hargreaves (1995) refers to these experiences as 'contrived' and 'co-optative' and recognises them as one of the pitfalls of collaboration (p. 155). This time of uncertainty and shifting structure may have challenged teachers' professional identities and required them to change their way of working. Individuals seemed inconsistent in their responses regarding the nature, extent and value of collegial collaboration. Nevertheless, main themes can still be identified within their stories.

It is clear in the early career stories that support from Heads of Department and experienced teachers in providing resources was both expected and greatly appreciated. Clearly this is evidence of some of the benefits of collaboration as described by Hargreaves (1996) in pooling collective knowledge, reducing workload and increasing the effectiveness of the young teacher (p. 155)

I had done Year 11 Economics and failed badly, and suddenly I was thrown in. I was given really good support by the staff here and, particularly by the Head of that Department, he was fantastic. So that was good.

(Cleo, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

Richard described two different experiences, both in contract positions in country

schools. (Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003.) He described his first appointment as a survival situation.

Basically you are thrown in the deep end, out in the middle of nowhere, and you had to survive and work out what you're going to do, how you are going to assess, what you're going to present.

In a subsequent replacement position, the resources left behind were sufficient to support the young teacher.

I was also teaching Senior Maths so I had a small group, probably six or seven. The teacher had left me good resources to work with, so that it was a matter picking up what he would have normally done in that period of time.

The varying experiences depended solely on the situation within the school context. Hargreaves (1995) described the sharing of resources as 'comfortable and complacent' collaboration (p. 155) but in this instance it was valued professional support for a young teacher. It is important to note that the resources and programs that Richard found so helpful are the types of 'tried and true' materials that experienced teachers have developed and refined over their years of teaching. At Horizon College teaching programs are generally recorded centrally but most teaching resources are held by the teachers themselves. Thus when a teacher leaves the College or leaves teaching altogether, those resources are lost from that site.

Only Thomas's experience in New Zealand was evidence of external support from the system for a beginning teacher and even then, this was sparse and unsupported from within the school. (Thomas, Teacher Past Interview, 31st August 2003)

There were a lot of people who taught Maths because there was no one else to do it and you were not quite flying by the seat of your pants but you had a lot of learning to do in one year. There was supposed to be follow up, but the only real support came from the inspectors that came around and checked up on you but there was nothing much from the school.

As teachers become more experienced they appear to have more networks and better

strategies to learn from their colleagues. Teachers spoke readily about sharing resources and ideas.

The interaction with fellow department members tends to revolve around providing materials, providing guidance, backups, support. I really like the people in the Science Department. I really enjoy working with them.

(Simon, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

You can ask questions, you can share ideas about how to do things, you can share resources, assignments, tests, notes you can ask about stuff like this, how you would approach this particular topic, and they can say, 'Well, this is the way I do it', then you can decide whether you'll do it that way or do something different.

(Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

Going in cold to a class is very difficult, so given a unit of work, you probably follow it for the first two to three weeks verbatim and then adapt. I think when you know the students then you adapt to their personalty, to their abilities, their interests. In some cases you may even go for the whole term or semester and then review, see what worked for you and then adapt or change it.

(Cleo, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

As well as sharing teaching materials, there is also evidence of teachers sharing and reflecting on classroom practices, suggesting the collaboration is more than 'comfortable and complacent' (Hargreaves, 1996, p. 155). Despite the fact that most of the teaching resources are held by the teachers themselves at Horizon College, these experienced teachers seem prepared both to seek out and to share the resources they hold. Although teachers may gain the initial materials, programs and some professional advice from other teachers, they ultimately assume the professional responsibility for meeting students' needs. The comments suggest that the teachers may be working in isolation to develop from these resources the practices and methodologies which suit them best. This may be because of the limited opportunity for further collaboration or possibly it is necessary for the teachers to be able to identify their own interpretations and decisions about actions. Johnson (2004), in his model of Professional Learning Teams for

teachers' learning, supports 'diversity' in teachers' actions and practice (p. 56). He respects their professionalism, but highlights the need for 'alignment', where teachers are orientated toward common key learning purposes and practices, having an awareness of each other and current circumstances.

Deprivatisation of their teaching practices is evident to some extent in the College. There is no explicit indication, however, that the faculty as a group is creating new knowledge and identifying and solving teaching and learning challenges through classroom research — evidence of the 'norms of reflective practice' that characterise a Professional Learning Community. While readily sharing resources and prepared to seek professional advice, the teachers gave no indication that they sought or received any feedback from their colleagues on their own classroom performance. Classroom duties were considered more of an individual endeavour, drawing on student feedback.

I don't have a relationship with too many staff who give me feedback on my teaching. To be honest with you I prefer that feedback from the students and it's probably where the course appraisal comes into it and as we know students can be very, very honest ... I guess that's the nature of teaching. There is a certain amount of, I don't know, isolation maybe a strong word, but 'this is the way I like to do things and this is the way I do them', and so I don't really seek a lot of guidance from others. I might share some ideas and take a little bit of what I think will work for me, but I really do believe that teaching is defined very much by your personality and we all have very, very individual personalities, and I don't like imitating what someone else is doing, even if it is working really well because my personality is quite different and I may not be able to carry it on in the same way.

(Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

There is some contradiction here in relation to Simon's previous statement about working with others.

Working within a team has always been something that I enjoy. I like team building, team work, even the way I managed different areas, I've always tried to get people working in teams because it's a personal belief of mine, that's an engaging factor as well, getting involved with other teachers that are doing similar

things to myself, hopefully doing it well.

Collaboration is a significant motivator for experienced teachers but there is a strong sense of personal responsibility for the classroom, as if teachers are on their own once they pass through the classroom door. While this is accepted as ‘the nature of teaching’ possibly it is a culture that has been perpetuated by the expectation that a ‘good teacher’ has this aspect under control. Simon experienced this when managing teachers in his Head of Department role.

You see it with lots of people, generally they like to get into that classroom, create their own climate and you know someone coming in and interfering with that climate sometimes is not really met with great approval and you see it when you’re trying to offer some help with classroom management issues and teachers get very defensive about that.

One is mindful of Simon’s initiation at his first school where it was made quite clear that teachers take responsibility for their own classrooms.

I would go to the Principal, who eventually became a fairly good friend, and I would say ‘Look this sort of thing is happening in the classroom’ and he (the Principal) would look at me and say ‘Well, with a fellow of your size and stature we don’t expect to have those problems.’

To share visions, goals, resources, concerns, challenges, strategies and solutions with colleagues is professionally rewarding and personally supportive. The fundamental position for teachers is the classroom where one ‘flies solo’ and accepts the ultimate responsibility. This remains as lingering evidence of the ‘privacy norm’, identified by McLaughlin and Talbert (2001), existing between experienced teachers and governing collegial relations in high schools (p. 69). This culture forms a barrier to collegial learning and professional honesty as teachers practise their craft in isolation from peers.

The individualist nature of classroom teaching can create a culture of independence but it locks away extensive professional expertise that is lost when those teachers retire. Such teachers are willing to share their knowledge with younger staff when they feel that their experience will be respected.

I think that there is a mutual respect between us and that sort of interaction is going well. I guess the thing is that most of them are a little bit younger than me and they are quite happy to seek guidance, opinions, advice, approval, disapproval, the whole lot.

(Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

Since 2003, I have taken several 'guest' sessions at Flinders' University with pre-service teachers in Curriculum Studies in Mathematics. The two sessions I take are 'Teaching Motivated and Interested Students in Mathematics' and 'Good Mathematical Investigations and Projects'. As well as supplying copies of my own teaching resources, I role-play and model good teaching practices. My intention is also to impassion these young student teachers and their willing positive response is both affirming and motivating for me. I have formed close relationships with some of these students who are now novice teachers and still contact me for advice and support. Since 2005, I have run similar sessions for a P.D. Pathways project which is intended for experienced teachers who are retraining as Mathematics teachers. This year for the Mathematical Association, I have also recently conducted several repeat sessions entitled 'Motivating Students to Succeed' with teachers of Year 12 Mathematics, both experienced and inexperienced. The response from attendees indicates to me that teachers at all stages of their careers are eager and sometimes desperate to form collegiate partnerships and engage in discussions about the complexities of their craft. Furthermore, I find that in preparing these sessions I have to formalise, rationalise and justify my teaching intentions and practice.

7.5 Summary

Alignment with a well-articulated and well-practised vision and ethos in the workplace becomes increasingly more important to these teachers as their careers progress. Feelings of alignment met the teachers' needs for *affiliation* with their workplace and hence were a very influential factor when considering changing schools or choosing a new work-site. Primarily, teachers used the job interview, as well as documentation and reputation to a lesser extent, to judge their possible affiliation with the school ethos. To change to a school with a strong vision was considered a positive career move.

Although a shared vision was a strong motivator for these teachers in their school context, there was a high expectation that decisions and actions would align with that vision. Therefore the teachers experienced significant dissatisfaction if there was conflict in how best to achieve those goals. In the instances in this research, teachers either compromised regretfully and conformed to the prevailing culture of the College or resisted which led to conflict that affected future teaching opportunities for that teacher. Any such conflicts which may have been resolved successfully did not feature in the stories of our teachers possibly because they were no longer significant memories.

Although difficult to achieve, it was possible to shift school cultures over time with some support from within management and with the influx of new staff members who hold or are conducive to the new culture. Teachers are conscious of culture shifts occurring in their schools over a period of time but are not always aware of the cause. Issues of gender equity were endemic to this particular school context but there is evidence to suggest that teachers are sensing improved conditions for women in this workplace. These teachers were tolerant of some personal misalignment with the ethos of the College as long as it was consistent with the overt purpose of the school and did not compromise their fundamental beliefs about teaching and learning.

As indicators of the teachers' *affiliation* with their school, positive social interaction and moral support were very significant aspects of the collegial relationships in this school context. The four late-career teachers had differing needs but all felt a strong association with the community. This strong sense of community is more indicative of the characteristics of the school rather than those of the individuals within and reflects the College's shared vision and governing founding principles.

The teachers' stories revealed some enduring memories of unresolved conflicts. The teachers hold some regret for not achieving closure through open and honest dialogue. The strong personal relationships that have developed between teachers, however, may hinder the development of a professional culture where they welcome others to challenge their thinking. Disagreement may be considered as a threat to the strong sense of association and alignment promoted in the community. Managers, however, with knowledge of personnel management and understanding of organisational learning can

promote an environment of professional openness in such a context, drawing on teachers' shared vision and mutual respect and trust.

Teachers are both motivated and supported by collaboration with colleagues but while they readily share resources, these are often held by the teachers themselves rather than stored centrally. While these teachers readily exchange materials, ideas and strategies, they remain independent in relation to classroom responsibilities. Allowing diversity in practice is important to maintain the professional discretion of the teachers as long as teachers remain aligned with the shared vision and aware of each other and the reality of the school context. It is, however, not conducive to ongoing learning for the individual or their less-experienced colleagues, if their classrooms remain private domains. These experienced teachers are keen to share their knowledge with others when they feel their expertise and lived experiences are valued and respected. As well as being an indicator of professional collaboration, the opportunity to share their expertise is also a motivator for these teachers, satisfying their need for *influence* as well as *affiliation* in their community.

Chapter Eight: Research Findings — Influence

8.1 Teachers' Influence Needs in the Workplace

The work stories shared by the four teachers also highlighted motivations that principally related to satisfying the human need for *influence*. *Influence* for teachers relates to the level of respect and recognition they enjoy in their role. It is evident in the degree to which they feel consulted, listened to, acknowledged and recognised and in its absence, teachers feel powerless, dominated and devalued. Two of the six central themes that were identified from the teachers' stories that relate predominately to satisfying the teachers' need for *influence* in their school are Issues of Management and Students.

8.2 Issues of Management

The 'supportive and shared leadership' that characterizes a Professional Learning Community provides a work context that enables teachers to satisfy their need for *influence*. Stories from the theme, Issues of Management, highlight how experiences pertaining to leadership and educational change affected these teachers' perceptions of their *influence* in their school.

In Chapter Seven, Cleo's comments suggested that mutual collegial respect at Horizon College was not age dependent. While Cleo felt that there was no age discrimination amongst colleagues, she went on to add that experienced teachers are not accorded the same respect in the decision making process.

I feel a dissatisfaction with the decision making process here in that we have staff who have been here for 35 years and have a wealth of knowledge and hindsight. They are intelligent, experienced teachers who are not taken advantage of when a new fad comes up. We tend to not really probe into the dark corners of it and listen to what those staff have to say. We often gather in groups, discuss and put it on paper but when we finally come back to it, it is pretty evident that their experiences don't really count an awful lot. It is almost as if their time has come and gone and this is the new age, so we're only listening to what's all new. Yet, I think you can't get away from the fact that we are still educators.

(Cleo, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

These comments do not suggest that disrespect is being shown to the late career teachers personally but more that the decision making processes within the school imply that there is little to be learnt from the past and that 'we're only listening to what's all new'. Perhaps the stereotypes depicting experienced teachers as resistant to innovation and endeavouring to preserve the prevailing culture have in some way discredited them in professional discussions about change. Cleo makes the assertion on behalf of experienced teachers that 'we are still educators', claiming her entitlement to some *influence* in the educational decisions made, despite approaching the latter stages of her career.

Management personnel in schools exercise considerable role authority that directly affects the work of teachers. Therefore it is not surprising that the teachers' stories have themes relating to their expectations of the management in the school context.

8.2.1 Management Personnel

It has already been noted the importance that job interview experiences play when teachers are choosing their new worksite. In the short interaction of a job interview with the management of a school, teachers form opinions of the school culture but also the style of management that is practised. Dinham and Scott (2000) found that superiors and educational employers were common sources of dissatisfaction for teachers. Teachers can feel relatively powerless in work relationships with their management. Therefore, it is important that management undertakes procedural fairness in controlling major aspects of teachers' work conditions, signalling the status and personal regard afforded to them in the school community. Opinions and beliefs about the role and influence of school management are made clear in the stories of these experienced teachers. As experienced practitioners they need to feel that management will support and encourage their professional priorities and inspirations.

You're a bit more energized, when you suggest or need to buy things and people say, 'O.K., we'll see what we can do', and encouraging rather than creating blocks. Creating opportunities rather than barriers to do things that are going to

affect the way you work in your classroom and the way the kids learn.

(Richard, Teacher Present Interview, 2nd October 2003)

Respect for managers is clearly evident for those leaders who through their words and actions claim ownership of the community and are proud of their school, staff, and students. Simon stated very clearly the expectations he holds for school management (Simon, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003).

I found the leadership very, very good, very professional, very straight forward with a very, very enthusiastic approach towards running this particular place, like I hadn't seen before. ... It was important that you are working in a school where the principal is very proud of the environment and says so not only within the school but also outside which he did quite often.

This sort of ownership indicates to teachers that the management have the right priorities, centring their efforts on school improvement and not self-promotion.

Lack of good stable leadership can affect teachers' commitment to schools as Simon describes his reasons for changing schools to find a more professional environment.

I was just about to start (sic) the third principal and I don't think that any of them really improved the school at all, in fact in one case the school did go down quite a bit and in the last case where I didn't expect he would spend much time, it was just a career movement for someone. I don't think he thought that much of the school anyway and I have always been a big fan of people who actually head schools having a very keen interest in the way they're running.

He made a choice to work in a context where the management prioritised the welfare of the community and he showed clear disdain for those who sought promotional positions in their own interests. It is very evident that teachers have a poor view of personal ambition being considered above being able to contribute to school improvement as the motivation for seeking promotion. Thomas felt a need to defend his application for promotion to Head of Department (Thomas, Teacher Past Interview, 31st August 2003).

It wasn't any drive for personal gain when I think about it. I went after the job

rather than after the glory, so that makes the difference.

This belief is a very important part of teacher culture to the extent that to over-emphasise promotional advancement as a measure of personal success can cause dissociation. Yet again, Simon stated his views very strongly (Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003).

Sometimes there's this opinion that you haven't succeed unless you've reached this particular level. I don't subscribe to that, and sometimes that actually affects the relationship I have with people that think that way.

These comments also relate to the teachers' views on the status and rewards associated with their career progression and promotion which is discussed further in Chapter Nine. Self-promoting or ineffective leaders do not always cause teachers to leave that particular school context, as Simon states.

When there are structures in place it doesn't really matter as you can see out someone who's not doing their job properly at the top, for a short period of time.

The depth of the formal and informal leadership, as well as the strength of the shared vision, both characteristic of a Professional Learning Community, can build and uphold those structures in schools that Simon refers to.

My recent reaction to what I considered as poor curriculum leadership for the school during 2001 to 2003 was to focus on good management of my own department. I sought alliances with other middle managers and chose to work with and through the management personnel I considered most effective. While I justified this as protecting the quality of education for the students, I can see my actions and those of others, undermined the authority and influence of the curriculum leader. While we consolidated different cohorts within middle management and teachers, our actions fragmented the staff as a whole. Ultimately the curriculum leader left the school. Had I not found middle management and teachers to share my concerns for the direction of his leadership, it may have been I who left.

McGregor (1960) stated that the lower order need of security for employees in the

modern work place was that of being given the 'fairest possible break' (p. 37). The school context is a complex social structure and as managers of such, management must be seen to exercise procedural fairness in adjudicating competing interests of faculties and individuals. Any attempts to manipulate or corrupt this balance are what teachers' collectively refer to as the 'politics' of the school context. This unilateral term embraces all that late-career teachers find distasteful in the obstruction of justice in the management of schools, whether it be manipulation by colleagues to gain advantage or corruption by management to achieve their own ends.

I love teaching. I hate the politics. Politics is the 'who you know situation' which is probably not as bad in our school as some others. Whether you get the subjects you have put down for depends very much on who's choosing the staffing at that time.

(Cleo, Teacher Future Interview, 16th January 2004)

The classroom component of the vocation of teaching remains a strong motivator for experienced teachers but they are well aware of the political nature of their school context and the inevitable impact that has on their work, such as the allocation of classes. It is not surprising that they described the 'politics' of schools as a factor that disengages them from their careers.

Disengaging (factors) would always be the politics that is (sic) involved, particularly as you get more experienced and you realise that sycophants are popular people, and you are never going to be one of them. There are times when decisions are made that are so blatantly political and they are not for the best interests of the school, the students or the staff but obviously for someone's gain. That makes me really wonder how many times I can actually just swallow and not say anything about it.

(Cleo, Teacher Future Interview, 16th January 2004)

While all participants acknowledged the many relational conflicts and power struggles in a teacher's working context, none admit to playing the 'politics' to their own advantage.

I know if asked, I would also speak negatively about the 'politics' in school

contexts yet my previous recount shows how I was part of the politically motivated actions that influenced the power structure in my school. I think that we all play politics, either actively or passively but the idea of 'bad politics' comes from the intention to gain personal benefit, rather than benefit for the school towards its educational purpose.

Hargreaves (1995) acknowledges that 'teachers feel that getting involved in politics is self-seeking and generally distasteful'(p.18) but he encourages teachers to understand the political configuration in their schools and use 'positive politics' to benefit their students by securing support and resources and empowering students, parents and colleagues to be more competent.

The teachers seemed to accept, resignedly, the consequences of the political actions of others, for their own work, and claimed to be unprepared to 'play the game'. Perhaps they had found that acting otherwise would not solve the problems.

I just sit and watch the power plays in the place...a good example — I overheard someone saying to other people that he did not mind stepping over anyone and everyone and making everyone upset. I think that was particularly disruptive. I just can't recall anything positive that he did. He managed to grease the right people, very astute...he did an atrocious job as Year Level Director. With my sense of fairness, I worry about the way he was treating other people. I tried to influence the situation by making comments to people about what is happening, passing comments in informal situations but in terms of actually affecting the situation ...? I suppose I got angry because of that feeling of powerlessness. Not acceptance but recognizing that's the way it is and you can't do much about it apart from make comments at appropriate times without having it in for anyone.

(Thomas, Teacher Future Interview, 30th May 2004)

Senge (1993) describes an environment dominated by internal politics as one of self-interest and not shared vision; it is about people building power and others losing it (p. 273). Senge suggests that the only antidote to such divisive internal politics and game playing is a culture of openness and commitment to vision. The teachers felt that they understood the politics of a school context and were able to recognise those who

manipulate this culture to their own benefit which is distasteful to those who view their vocation with a higher moral purpose. Interestingly all the individuals that featured in the stories of political transgressions were no longer at the school. This may be due to the mobile nature of politically active people or their misfit with the school culture. It may also be true that the participants were less likely to discuss the current political situation. Teachers hope that good managers will be ethical in their leadership role and also be alert to the political influences that others may exercise to pervert justice in decision making.

Work intensification is threatening the sustainability of workers in schools. For teachers, such as Simon, the antidote is the pursuit of 'life balance'. Fullan (1991) recognised that balancing work and life as an important protection against burnout and suggested it also 'leads to more interesting teachers and more interesting teaching' (p.76). This supports Simon's belief that putting more effort and time into your career, to the detriment of other aspects of your life, does not make you a more effective teacher nor make the school a more effective learning organization or workplace. Aware of the increasing demands on their own time, teachers' recognise the commitment necessary to undertake a management role effectively.

Whether I want to spend sixty to seventy hours of a week working in that role, is another issue, because that's the reality of that job. Whether that's something I want to do. It's a big commitment, or whether you want to live the other half of your life doing more things. You wouldn't do it for the extra money only if you're really, really passionate.

(Richard, Teacher Future Interview, 28th November 2003)

Simon felt that performance in management is affected by the enormity of the role (Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003).

The way these schools have developed over the last ten years, in terms of the structure, the administrative (management) structure, there are a few people that basically take on too much, and they don't have, going back to the original point, a proper balance and therefore that then causes problems in the way they manage

their position. They get overloaded with things to the point where they don't see them clearly and my concern is that we do have some people that are in that situation. They just don't have that right balance and therefore things become a little bit skewed.

The pressures of time and accountability, combined with the desire to reach predetermined goals, affect the way management control the work of teachers. This is particularly evident in the recent experiences at Horizon College where the school has experienced a period of significant educational change.

8.2.2 Managing Educational Change

Over the timing of this research, Horizon College, as a professional community, experienced an intense period of a complete cycle of curriculum transformation. While it is impossible to determine where any cycle of change begins and ends, teachers experienced the proposal, initiation, implementation and evaluation of a significant curriculum and structural reform over the period from 2001 to 2005. Interestingly, I perceived this experience had a more destabilising effect on our younger staff who sought counsel from our late-career teachers during this turbulent period. In general, when discussing this experience in the interviews, the experienced teachers did not focus on the personal impact of the changes even though they were very immediate. Their perceptions were more generic comments about the effectiveness of the process and intentions of management, even considering the nature of educational change on a macro-level. Their stories also give an indication of the participants' expectation of their level of *influence* with regard to the changes, as classroom teachers and, for some, as Heads of Department.

Simon initiated our discussion by considering the systemic and societal motivations for educational change. When considering the recent and immediate change experiences in his work which would be upmost in his mind, this shows a global perspective uncommon to most teachers (Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003).

It just seems to be outside bodies who want to correlate educational schools with industry ...you just get the impression that there's some sort of bureaucrat in the

education building who has got some idea of, 'O.K. Let's make schools relevant to the workforce'. Now and then you can get into a big sort of philosophical debate, a close colleague and I do sometimes and it comes to a standard functional approach to education. Nobody wants education for the sake of education. It's got to be there for a purpose, and that's it in a nutshell; where the issue really stems from. What happens after that depends on the school that you are in.

Aware of the restructuring of schools for economic purposes and the loss of the intrinsic value of education, Simon then turns to the control that individual schools have within the system. Simon acknowledges that there is the possibility of a greater level of autonomy for the management of Horizon College as a non-systemic school when compared to schools in the state educational system but this is not necessarily afforded to staff, or even to middle management.

My personal opinion is that they've chosen from the things that are around and have decided to apply them, the way they see fit and what they think are important to this school and that's where our current educational change comes from. I don't for one minute blame any external bodies, because that information and that guidance are out there and the schools pick and choose the way they see fit. There are some non-negotiables but most things are negotiables, as you know, and what we're doing really is following a guideline. I think that our situation is related to the structure that we have in this school, one candidate who has acquired a position, has a vision, and that candidate now is carrying out that vision with the backing of the Principal. I think that's fair enough.

The educational changes planned in this College then, are perceived to be the choice of the management and ultimately owned and driven by them and Simon seems to accept this as the prerogative of the principal. Even as a member of middle management, Simon uses the pronoun 'they' when discussing the decision makers, implying that he had little ownership of the change. It is unclear whether Simon has come to accept this as the way things are or whether this is his belief about the appropriate process of educational change. Nevertheless, there remains an optimism that whatever change brings, Simon will endeavour to make his implementations yield positive outcomes for student learning. I hope it does work and I have certainly done the best that I can to make it work, even

though there are times when I haven't fully understood it myself or the system works in a way I am not familiar with but, you know, I don't have a problem with educational change, I just think its to be manageable and I think it needs to be to the advantage of our students because really that's our orders.

It appears that it is the 'manageable' aspect of the implementation of the change that is most contentious and this will become more apparent in the stories of the teachers living the change which are discussed later.

The classroom teachers described the initial stages of the change as being more specifically the innovation of the deputy in charge of curriculum. Richard understands the nature of the change and the reasons for it but still appears passive in his description indicating he had little *influence* in the process (Richard, Teacher Present Interview, 2nd October 2003).

I think he has made it clear he would like to see differences in the way we teach, and that extended periods of time would suit a broader variety of methodologies, for instance group work, collaborate learning and some of those types of different methodologies rather than chalk and talk and writing questions/answers, or really short practicals. That desire for a different methodology in a school was, I believe, his impetus for wanting to change. Also the idea for new curriculum being framed in the SACSA Framework but that framework had been proposed from outside so how are we going cater for that within our structure?

There is a tacit acceptance that the change would be based on an external framework and that it be formulated and driven by the individual whose management portfolio is the curriculum in the College. Despite accepting the prerogatives in the origins of educational change within the school, the successful implementation would still be highly dependent on the teachers' role in the change process. Marris (1986) in his discussion of the management of change, states that no one can resolve the crisis of reintegration on behalf of another and efforts to pre-empt conflict, argument and protest by rational planning will only be abortive. Reformers may have had months or years to assimilate the changes to their own purposes and consider that they only need to explain the change. He states that if they 'shrug off opposition as ignorance or prejudice, they

express a profound contempt for the meaning of lives other than their own' (p. 155). He suggests that the process of reform must expect and even encourage conflict, respect the autonomy of different kinds of experience and allow for time and patience. These characteristics do not seem apparent in the experience of change at Horizon College. Richard describes the reactions of some teachers.

We were informed about it at the in the professional development activities and staff meetings. I think a lot of people don't listen to anything that is said in a lot of those sessions, and just block it out and say 'I don't want to know this'. Then they'll come out and say, 'I don't know what's going on'. There's an unwillingness to be open to change in a lot of people, and therefore they'll blame (others).

A report entitled 'Review of Curriculum Changes — Horizon College' prepared at the end of 2003, confirms Richard's perceptions. It acknowledges that management made a genuine effort to provide professional development opportunities either by way of whole staff in-servicing or course writing workshops for individual faculties. It also acknowledges that 'a number of members of staff were privately expressing serious concerns about aspects of the curriculum changes but that these were not being conveyed openly to college management'. There was strong anecdotal evidence to suggest that 'a number of staff failed to engage the opportunity of meaningful consultation because of their diminishing lack of support for the whole change program'. The report goes on to say that many teachers were unable to challenge or defend assertions because they were not familiar with current curriculum theory and practice and that 'the lack of critical challenge may have conveyed acquiescence when doubts were already arising'. The report attributed this situation to the lack of ongoing evaluation in monitoring the change.

While Richard believes it is a teacher's professional responsibility to take up the opportunities for input into the process, he also acknowledges that in reality it may have little impact.

Really, we all have some responsibilities as educators to listen and to be open and to find out or what is this going to happen, why are we doing it. At that earlier

stage possibly have some input. There may be a sense that the changes are being imposed, that we're not really in control of it and we're not having much say in it, but, I think there are avenues where you can make comment. We've been told on frequent occasions to speak to your Head of Department if you want to comment about it. He commented about the Science with the pracs and stuff and then nothing. The reality is nothing's changed so perhaps there is some frustration. People might say, 'There's no point making a comment because things are going to stay how they've decided up there in the end anyway.'

Richard tried to view the situation from different perspectives indicating that there were many complex factors contributing to the breakdown in communication. One would expect this from a reflective practitioner, but at this point in the research, he was to take up a middle management position in the next school year and possibly this prompted him to keep a foot in both camps, that of classroom teacher and Head of Department.

Once again the 2003 report supports Richard, identifying the inconsistency between faculties contributing to the problems. While faculty members 'anticipated and expected that the concerns they raised at their sometimes-infrequent faculty meetings were clearly carried upwards by the Head of Department to Curriculum Committee and to Deputy Curriculum (sic), evidence suggests that this did not necessarily occur in all departments, or at least, not to the degree expected'. The report claims that this situation was compounded by Heads of Department not necessarily conveying requests and explanations back to their respective faculties with a level of appropriate consistency and as a result 'frustration and some polarisation developed'. Certainly the teachers were feeling that they had no *influence* in directing the changes and the rift occurring at middle management level threatened the affiliation across the whole community, possibly strengthening the cohesion within the teaching body but fragmenting the staff as a whole.

While the new timetable has benefits for student learning which is widely acknowledged, staff are experiencing a perceived loss of non-contact time and therefore intensification in their work. Management have presented statistical evidence that this is not the case but staff remained unconvinced. In the 2003 report, the consultant drew on

his own experience to suggest that ‘many staff have little knowledge or understanding about global budgets, finite resources, organisational viability or even job dependency’. He summarised the workload challenges faced by teachers by stating that ‘they just want more time to do what is expected of them!’ Richard described how he perceived teachers experience this challenge.

The fact so many staff are against it, I find just disappointing that there’s so much negativity about it but the reality is that you don’t have as much time to prepare or mark. Now why that is? They can fiddle with numbers and say whatever they like, but that is the reality in terms of how you feel and how you are. So, there are benefits but also issues, and staff will move out of the place, or move on. They don’t feel compelled to be in any one place if they’re not happy with that system.

Certainly Richard’s career history shows that he is prepared to move schools if he finds the work context unsupportive, but his experience in a variety of schools has also led to him having more tolerance, knowing that teachers in every school face their own challenges.

If you’re feeling really exhausted and stressed, because of that contact time, then people will look for alternatives where they think it may be better. It may not be any better. You’ve got to weigh all these things up as far as an overall situation, but a lot of people here have not. They don’t know other systems, other situations and don’t have anything to compare it with. They are always comparing with what they had before, whereas there was general concern for the way it worked before too, so, I don’t know what the answer is.

The complexities of the contested situations in schools, particularly the timetable, do not have simple solutions but the negative consequences for students and teachers remain a reality.

A lot of our Science teachers are doing practicals in their lesson plus half of lunch, so they end up with a ten-minute break. Now that’s not right, and that’s a reality that we’re used to having a double lesson, in fact, you need it for some practicals and some tests, so you’re giving up more of your own time to maintain the quality of education that you expect for the students and penalizing yourself and the kids.

Because the new timetable does not allow the teachers to offer the educational experiences they consider important for students, they make personal sacrifices to perform their duty as they see it. This is not a long term solution as it jeopardises the health and well being of staff and students.

The question remains as to whether teachers felt these problems were being recognised and that a compromise into which they had some input was being sought. As with the implementation of this new timetable, often teachers feel that one problem is being exchanged for another. The lesson length was extended to fifty minutes to encourage teachers to build more variety into their lessons, but the abolition of double lessons affected practical subjects. Lengthening the lesson is a very indirect attempt to change teacher methodology. Senge (1993) states that efforts to manipulate behaviour even through well intentioned programs will generally only improve matters in the short term and may lead to still more problems in the long run. The ability to influence reality comes from seeing structures that are controlling behaviour and events. Behaviours that are mirrored in many school systems are influenced by the structure of schools which basically have remained unquestioned. While schools internally try to solve problems within their financial constraints, they are simply shifting the 'hot spots'. In this situation the planned changes to curriculum offerings in Horizon College were implemented within the same conditions; the same staffing ratios, within a standard school day from 8.30 a.m. to 3.30 p.m., the same proportion of teacher contact time and minimal finances for resourcing the change. Cleo expressed her frustration at what she considers the minimal learning capacity of the system (Cleo, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003).

I find that no matter how many times we alter the way we do things, we do not learn from our mistakes. We do not use models that are already out there so that we are less stressed and we get the time to do things properly.

These comments imply that repeated efforts to adapt and improve the structures within the school context have been futile and each change brings its own problems. Yet there is a belief that better systems exist in other schools and that these are not being sought out and adopted. Teachers look for the fault within the school context in its inability to

achieve its goals, rather than considering the political forces acting at the macro level that are influencing the school structures and teachers' way of working, as identified by Smyth and Shacklock (1998). The implication is that the global education system is not acting effectively in sharing good practices and systems which provide solutions to problems that have historically existed for teachers and schools.

I believe that we, at our school in particular, tend to take up the new ideas far too quickly. We tend to go with Mark One instead of waiting for Mark Two and we fall into a hole.

By implementing change without allowing for sufficient consideration and modification, teachers may not have gained the big picture of the nature and purposes of the innovations and hence are unable to avoid foreseeable problems. Thomas shared his perceptions of the recent change process (Thomas, Teacher Present Interview, 26th October 2003).

Typical of the change in this school, it was driven by one person who likes things happening yesterday, without necessarily considering the consequences of the change itself. I think it was poorly planned, poorly organized, and poorly communicated, as we are finding now with the disruption for Maths with Year 9. In terms of other impacts, it wasn't seen as necessary to plan it through and to think about consequences and relationships to timetabling.

Like Simon and Richard, Thomas perceived the change to be driven by one particular manager but interestingly it was not the Deputy of Curriculum. Thomas's main criticism here was the unrealistic timeframe rather than the push for curriculum review and so this may explain his criticism of the manager, higher in the hierarchy than the Deputy of Curriculum, for not ensuring the change was manageable. However, Thomas's criticism of this particular manager may also be attributable to their strained personal relationship due to Thomas's previous performance management experiences which are discussed in more detail in Chapter Nine. Nevertheless, it seems that in this situation, teachers felt the need to attribute the motivation for the change to someone. This could be an indicator that the teachers had not seen inherent benefits in the change or that they did not sense that the management team was unified and moving in consensus towards improved

educational outcomes.

Although there was no feeling of ownership for the change, Thomas does not express any specific dissatisfaction with his lack of *influence* over the change. Most of his concern centres on the poor implementation and communication associated with its implementation and the unrealistic timeline. He is in fact supportive of the spirit of the reform.

I personally liked what is being done; I think it is my style of teaching in terms teaching students why they're doing things rather than just some mechanical process, so I like the idea but in terms of how it has come about, no.

There is also some grief over previous cycles of change that despite a lot of time and effort invested seem to subside.

...seeing a number of things happen here driven by one person's ideas and a number of them came screaming down around our ears. Spending heaps of time on, what's the last one we did, um

Is that Profiles?

Profiles, that's what we did. We spent so much time writing those and nothing happened.

Fullan (2001) stated that the endless cycles of change in schools have negative consequences for the strength and spirit of the community. These experienced teachers have memories of previous frameworks in which they invested considerable time and energy beyond their normal working commitment. Thomas's inability to even remember the title of the last reform indicates its lack of enduring relevance to his work. These experiences erode teachers' trust in the management's intentions for educational reform. Regardless of the durability of the new framework, there is a need for change to be manageable and within an achievable time frame but the leaders of the change had an unrealistic perception of what can be managed when there is no suspension of any of the teachers' normal duties. Reeves (2006) suggests that to avoid 'initiative fatigue', a strategic leader should 'pull the weeds before planting the flowers' (p. 2). He suggests

that principals should remove at least one or two existing activities, plans or other time-consumers before introducing a new program. Cleo explained the pressures she experienced in her work at this time (Cleo, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003).

Teachers generally like to do things well and not really given the time to do that, unless it impacts on your own personal life and this creates stress that you can't dissipate. It's just there and it has to be done by a certain time.

In addition, this work was considered to be a poorly defined task, given to teachers by their superiors and these extra tasks competed with the important work that they themselves considered integral to their core business.

It felt that we had been ambushed and not enough of 'why we're going to be doing this', was given to the staff, we didn't have a flow-chart or any kind of diagram that would say to us — this is how it's all going to work, these are the dates, these are the units proposed. I believe as professionals, we shouldn't have that thrust on us but discuss it, look at the pros and cons, look at what some of the short-falls could be and try to realise those before we started.

These statements by Cleo totally confirmed how I had imagined the teachers in my department may have felt about the changes. Her sense of powerlessness and lack of influence over the entire process was palpable. I had feelings of guilt as being part of middle management when this transpired but also I shared her frustration at not having any control over the process. As a member of the Curriculum Committee, I felt like an observer in the engine room of a run away train and someone had disconnected the emergency brake cord.

This proposed change was a monumental shift in methodology and curriculum offerings with associated implications for assessment and course counselling. It was inconceivable that this could be achieved without a significant increase in workload for teachers yet there was little consideration given to the suspension of normal duties. To alleviate pressure on the classroom teacher, the Heads of Department assumed a considerable responsibility for preparing materials which undermines the transformational experiences and ownership for teachers. Cleo explained how both middle management and teaching staff experienced the stress associated with unrealistic deadlines that

eventually meant compromising professional standards.

The Heads of Department were asked to put together the units basically over a couple of days. Students weren't probably counselled as the best they could've been, as it was a very new process for us. The teachers had gone into the classroom on the Tuesday not knowing exactly what they were teaching, which I think is a terrible situation to find yourself in professionally.

Contrary to the shared and supportive leadership espoused for Professional Learning Communities, ineffective change management rendered the vision poorly identified and articulated and leaving teachers unable to visualize a working model. While there were high expectations, individuals felt that they had few opportunities to participate in the decision making and considered that they received insufficient support for implementation. A final summary of his perception of the situation was given by Simon as a member of middle management at the time (Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003).

The vision isn't clear to staff. I don't think everyone believes this is what Horizon needs. I think sometimes we don't clarify the issues at the curriculum level enough before they're passed on to staff. You have got the Heads of Departments who aren't clear, having to try and sell it to their staff, and that doesn't always work too well if you can't answer all the questions or you can't explain why. I just think that there needs to be less change, longer time-frame and all staff need to work with some sort of clarity in purpose, otherwise you just get very stressed, very confused and very worried.

Simon's observation of the 'top-down' model of change, identified by Fullan (1993) as indicative of bureaucratic control, caused the management to expend disproportionate amounts of energy to achieve the implementation of change. The change was to be enacted by teachers who had little ownership and so appeared resistant and reluctant to change; behaviour that Dinham (1996) claimed may be attributed to teachers' ageing. While these experienced teachers had not necessarily questioned the prerogative of the management to determine the direction of change in the school, they clearly expected the change to be well-articulated and well-managed. As professionals, they wanted the

opportunity to respond to the proposed changes and hoped that these responses would influence the direction of the change. Not being part of the creation of this particular vision was not the greatest concern for these experienced teachers, but in the communication and implementation of the change, management were viewed as lacking perspective and ‘balance’, ignoring the agendas that the teachers felt were important. Teachers were not totally convinced that all the changes would offer improved learning outcomes for students which is the real shared vision of the College. The teachers had lost some faith in the management team’s clarity of vision for the change as well as being critical of their managerial skills in developing the structures and processes necessary to achieve the vision.

8.3 Students

At Horizon College a classroom teacher spends over eighty per cent of their working day with students and so they feature frequently in the teachers’ stories. It is also necessary to acknowledge that the College has a long tradition of child-centred education and so for teachers working in such a context, students and their welfare would be central to their daily thinking and practice. It is the notions of respect and recognition in teacher-student relationships that relate to the teachers’ need for *influence*. Although the success of their students contributed to the teachers’ sense of *achievement*, the *influence* that teachers’ had on the formation of their students as people featured most prominently in their stories.

Although the students are such a focal point, they are rarely mentioned individually, but are often discussed in terms of the student body as prime benefactors in the educational system. The comments made by the interviewees in relation to students varied. They could be categorized into three main themes — student management, relationships with students and the rewards teachers gain from working with students.

8.3.1 Student Management

The literature suggests that student behaviour is predominantly a source of stress for inexperienced teachers and in fact it was rarely mentioned by these experienced teachers

(Dinham, 1993; Dinham, 1995; Farber, 1984; Goodson, 1995). If it was, it was considered part of the job.

I would never find a sole teaching stint stressful, if I'm just a classroom teacher, if I can use the word 'just' there —never have and never will.

(Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

Rare references were made about challenging student behaviours. Richard recalled encountering inappropriate student behaviours in the yard. This was during the first decade of his teaching career and he related the experience, incorporating a description of the nature of the school context.

It was very tough at school and I got on with practically everybody. I had no problems. I could walk up to any group that was around the yard and about to fight and they would just walk apart and let me talk to them and they got on pretty well with me.

(Thomas, Teacher Past Interview, 31st August 2003)

Responding successfully to the challenges in such a context can provide a great sense of *achievement* but it also is indicative of student respect for the teacher. Communicating with these students and feeling that they are responsive to his advice gave Thomas a sense of *influence*.

As Head of Department, I often have to deal with a perceived personality clash between a student and teacher that is disrupting the learning environment. My approach is to encourage the student to accept the challenge to improve the relationship. We practise scenarios in conflict resolution and prepare the student so they can negotiate mutually acceptable classroom conditions with their teacher. This process has been extremely successful, often enabling positive relationships where once there was unresolvable conflict. For me, the biggest rewards are the trust the student places in me when they accept the challenge, the courage and maturity that they show in negotiating with the teacher and finally their sense of achievement in changing the situation. I believe that my intervention has had a significant influence on the students; no longer seeing themselves as a

powerless victims but having some skills to improve their relationships.

The teachers made no reference to any specific student or class in recalling their behavioural management challenges yet did acknowledge such challenges in a generic reference.

Some classes require huge amounts of energy; trying to think through strategies that are going to be more successful with the group and perhaps modifying curriculum that might make it more suitable to the group, thinking about behaviour management issues and trying to work out if you need to do something differently or seek support from somewhere else.

(Richard, Teacher Present Interview, 2nd October 2003)

Such challenges create more of a 'creative' rather than 'emotional' tension (Senge, 1993, p. 151). They stimulate the teacher to react professionally to meet the needs of students and the coping strategies here are more proactive, not indicative of resignation. There is no sense of powerlessness or failure. It just seems to be a manageable work challenge.

Often the teachers attribute the student behaviours to school and system structures. Cleo referred to the effect that student choice in curriculum had on classroom management.

It was a subject that wasn't compulsory, so similar to Drama, the students choose to do it, so you knew that they either had a bit of talent or they had interest and they would be banging down the door when they got there, so that was really positive.

(Cleo, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

Richard identified that the inadequate provision of teaching resources can affect student management.

The lack of physical resources can cause stress. If you're not used to doing it a certain way, and using other equipment would make it more interesting. The kids are less interested in it and it makes it more stressful because it's boring, more boring than it should be, and you know that in your head.

(Richard, Teacher Present Interview, 2nd October 2003)

As well as contemporary and relevant content, Simon felt that teacher enthusiasm has a significant effect on the engagement of students in the classroom.

I quite like the subject area that I teach. There's just so much in Biology that's happening in terms of Biotechnology which then gets you into the cloning etc. Very, very much updated stuff, so a lot of what I read or see, any news programmes etc., are just so useful in class ... So you can start your lessons with an example and you can see their enthusiasm which in course, brings out the enthusiasm in yourself.

(Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

Feeling insufficiently prepared to teach one particular class, Richard accepted some responsibility for their behaviour and still recalls the experience after over a decade had past since taking the group.

The first R.E. class I ever taught, I really had no idea what I was supposed to do and I struggled a bit with that group, behaviour wise. I think that was partly because of not knowing what curriculum I was supposed to be doing.

(Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

Teachers did not suggest that the individual personalities of the students were the central cause of the behavioural issues, positive or negative. They attributed the issues to more organisational or systemic factors such as curriculum choice for students, availability of appropriate resources, relevance of curriculum and quality of teaching.

8.3.2 Relationships with Students

Teachers acknowledge that their relationships with students have evolved as their career progressed.

I do have a greater enthusiasm for the teaching role now more so probably than before and it might actually come from the realisation over time that you feel that you do have the attributes which enable you to become not only a good teacher

but a person who can be a little more relaxed in front of your students. ... I think what's happened over the last twenty years is that very high sense of formality has sort of disappeared and I can go into a classroom now and actually really enjoy myself.

(Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

This seems to contradict the concerns raised by Dinham (1996) who implied that the age difference increased the social distance between teachers and their pupils, suggesting that '*in loco parentis* is already giving way to *in loco grandparentis*' (p. 20). Dinham suggests that this double generation gap creates a lack of understanding or appreciation of the nature, pressures and demands of society today. Teachers certainly did not seem aware of any such distance and considering they have spent a large proportion of their time, over a continuous span of decades, working with and for young people it is difficult to know how one would become so far out of touch that one would suffer from Dinham refers to as 'culture shock' (p. 20).

Things that engage me are having students who you can talk in the yard on Yard Duty, who say hello to you as they pass; give you the soccer scores for Rio Madrid. Those interpersonal relationships that you develop with students are probably one of the most rewarding things about teaching; teaching from Year 8 through to the senior levels and watching them develop.

(Cleo, Teacher Future Interview, 16 January 2004)

8.3.3 Rewards from Working with Students

The rewards that teachers gain from working with students are evident in their responses. They consider their classroom work important and choose it as a priority for their future career path. Each participant made clear and explicit statements about the enjoyment they still derive from their classroom teaching.

I do enjoy just the bottom end of teaching where you are a teacher and you deal with the kids at that level.

(Cleo, Teacher Future Interview, 16th January 2004)

I still enjoy teaching I think that's the key that keeps you going, that I still like doing the job. There are days when you sort of wonder why you are here, but overall, you get on with 99 per cent of the kids in the school, get to know the staff and the students.

(Thomas, Teacher Present Interview, 26th October 2003)

The teaching is the most important part, because if I don't enjoy that then that's a hell of a lot of time I am spending in a class room getting quite miserable and so I made a conscious decision that goes back over a few years to make teaching a priority. I still think that there was this real need to make sure that the teaching was going well.

(Simon, Teacher Future Interview, 29th February 2004)

Some days it seems to be hyped up. It might be a particular topic that you are really passionate about. If you're doing something in Junior Science to do with environment and you've got really strong feelings, trying to save the world, the kids can sense that you are committed. They can see your view and they are committed to it. Being honest and genuine, being well prepared, having some resources and using a variety of methods to make it interesting, I suppose that would be another aspect of enthusiasm in teaching.

(Richard, Teacher Present Interview, 2nd October 2003)

The sense of *influence* for teachers is not just in giving the students new knowledge but in facilitating their achievement and in making a difference to them as learners and individuals.

In my last year there we had about a seventy percent pass rate, which for that school was unheard of. A lot of kids who normally would not pass; passed, and I contributed to that.

(Thomas, Past Interview, 31st August 2003)

Teaching from Year 8 through to the senior levels and watching them develop. Not just as people who you can talk to, but in the subject areas, where you in

particular, have taught them. You know they may have had strengths or weaknesses and they have now worked on those and you can see how well they're doing, that's very rewarding.

(Cleo, Teacher Future Interview, 16th January 2004)

I tend to know a lot of the lesser able kids in the school and what their strengths and weaknesses are. I tend to get on reasonably well with most of them, just struggling to get them to work but trying to at least always maintain the lines of communication with them. I try very hard not to divorce myself from kids with the manner I project to them. I maintain a good relationship, if not a professional relationship I suppose in terms of my job. For some of those kids, just having someone who is not going to yell and scream at them all the time is a positive.

(Thomas, Teacher Future Interview, 30th May 2004)

Their recognition of their work in their classroom is related to the difference that teachers can make in the lives of their students. While there had been no specific mention of challenging individual students, the memories of the positive influences teachers have had in the lives of their students does feature individuals. These memories highlight the lasting pleasure that teachers gain from student success.

I was told, 'April remembers you as the person that helped her get into those space schools and she values that', and that really is like the biggest form of positive that you can have and that's what it's all about, and those are really precious moments.

(Richard, Teacher Present Interview, 2nd October 2003)

The students that I taught that are now teachers, here with us, Sam, Daniel, Damien, Greg, Anthony, Nicolle, I taught all of them, and I find it amazing to get that, (it sounds like Disney), that circle of life where those students actually wanted to become teachers themselves.

(Cleo, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

..some of the kids have come up to me. Of course I don't recognize them, they are five years older than when they were at school, and they shake my hand and say

'hi' and you know that genuine, genuine appreciation of what you did to help them along. Of course they love telling you they're earning twice as much as you are and have got some really flash job. It's just that they were good decent kids, they've made it in the world and they don't need to get hugely successful. I think that's one of the strongest drives for me is to see that.

(Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

While there is recognition of the achievements of the students, the teachers seem to value the extent to which the students develop as good people, able to make their own way in the world. Richard's comment that 'they don't need to get hugely successful' is contrary to the focus on economic and market goals in education which prompted the restructuring of schools in the quest for more international competitiveness. Cleo's introduction in Chapter Six, explained her well-vision to impart the love of learning and the power of knowledge to her students. She also felt she had an important role in socialising students. Even when enculturating children into societal norms, Cleo's basic intentions are to impart high standards of behaviour and decency to maximise each student's academic and social development. Teachers' goals for students focus more on self-fulfilment for each individual. These goals are somewhat incongruous with the educational system which requires schools to act in the national interest for economic competitiveness.

Possibly because of his more reflective nature, Simon was the only teacher who mentioned wider political influences on education.

It just seems to be outside bodies who seem to want to correlate educational schools with industry and they just do the best they possibly can to give us some sort of an alignment with industry and that's where you get things like your Futures (from the Essential Learning Framework). Even though they're pretty basic things like communication through work etc., you just get the impression that that there's some sort of bureaucrat in the education building who has got some idea of, 'O.K. Let's make schools relevant to the workforce', and it comes to a standard functional approach to education. Nobody wants education for the sake of education. It's got to be there for a purpose.

8.4 Summary

The teachers' needs for *influence* were affected primarily by issues that related to management in their school and the impact of their relationships with students. Managerial styles employed in the school context, determine the status of teachers in their work relationship with management and will ultimately affect the degree of *influence* they experience in their work context. These experienced teachers are aware of this in making their decisions to remain in their school or when seeking a new worksite. They expect that managers will demonstrate procedural fairness in controlling major aspects of teachers' work conditions, afford appropriate status and personal regard to teachers in the school community, support and encourage teachers' professional priorities and inspirations and through both their words and actions, claim ownership of the community and be proud of their school, staff, and students. The teachers felt that good management would be impervious to unjust political influences and make ethical decisions in the best interests of the whole community but particularly to promote student wellbeing.

Several of the participants believed that a more global educational community with shared practices in school structuring could address the perennial problems of meeting contested goals in schooling with diminishing resources. Rather than questioning the political forces that cause these tensions, the teachers tended to feel that it was the trial and error efforts from within the school context that was unsuccessful in discovering this elusive perfect solution.

The teachers indicated that they would disengage from a school context where they observed self-promotion, self-interest and the overtly political behaviour that threatens the shared vision and strong community association. While this affects their need for *affiliation*, it is also related to their need for *influence*. They believe it is the responsibility of the managers to promote a culture where there is a 'fair deal' for everyone, decisions are made on merit rather than politics and leadership is shared and supportive.

It is the perception of these teachers that the current structures in schools are intensifying the work of managers as well as teachers and affecting the way leaders manage teachers' work. Time pressures and expectations of rapid change lead managers to employ 'top-down' models of change reducing the *influence* teachers have on decision making in their work context. These practices are ineffective and exhausting for management and teachers alike while at the same time fragmenting professional staff with middle management left straddling the chasm between classroom teachers and management.

While there is an acceptance for managers to drive the required changes by virtue of their role authority, the teachers expect them to be discretionary in their reforms; mindful of the appropriateness for the school context in line with the shared vision. There is also an expectation that the reform will be respectful of and responsive to teachers' professional opinions and implemented in a manageable time-frame recognising teachers' ongoing normal duties. This practice recognises the experience and expertise of the practitioners as well as valuing and respecting the challenges and the importance of their daily role in the classroom. There is an unquestioned acceptance of the additional work requirements at the discretion of the agency or the school management as 'part of the job'. There is however some undefined level at which this becomes unreasonable and exploitive and although this varies for individual teachers, it is related to both intensity, frequency and perceived value of the work.

These management issues affect teachers at all stages of their career but having more experience, these teachers were not accepting of such situations and had more strategies to find what they considered as positive outcomes for students. There was no acceptance, however, for the internal politics at a micro level that affects the just management of schools. This continues to be a major disengaging factor for experienced teachers and can only be addressed through the openness of communication and shared vision that characterise a Professional Learning Community.

These experienced teachers place a high priority on their classroom teaching and the welfare of their students. Rather than feeling that their own age and experience are detrimental to their relationships with their students, they feel they enhance them. These

teachers accepted student challenges as part of their job and found them to be creative rather than emotional tensions. They are highly motivated by their experiences with students. The students' achievements and development served to satisfy the teachers' need for *influence* but also they gave the teachers' a sense of *achievement*, acting as a measure of their effectiveness and success in their chosen vocation. Besides student outcomes, the stories revealed that teachers' sense of satisfaction could be affected by other indicators of their *achievement* in the performance of their job.

Chapter Nine: Research Findings — Achievement

9.1 Teachers' Achievement Needs in the Workplace

The human need for *achievement* is the need to feel competent and successful. McGregor (1985) states that this egoistic need, along with *influence*, is of great significance to both management and employee as motivation, as people will seek indefinitely to satisfy this need (p. 38). He describes this need as being related to self-respect and self-confidence, to autonomy and feelings of competence. It is not simple to define success in teaching where Barone (2001) describes the outcomes as ‘enormously complex, wide-ranging, highly ambitious, profoundly personal, unquestionably social, intrinsically political and inevitably subjective’ (p. 1). The stories of the participants revealed the career experiences that the teachers themselves thought were indicators of their success, or otherwise, in their work.

Dinham and Scott (2000) found that teacher satisfaction while anchored in the ‘human or affective domain’ of their work was ‘centred on achievement — both of pupils and themselves and the recognition of it’ (p. 6). As highlighted in the previous chapter, teachers gain a sense of *achievement* through their positive interactions with their students as well as the successes of the students themselves. In addition to this, the two remaining central themes of Career Progression and Performance Indicators also relate strongly to the teachers’ *achievement* needs in their workplace.

9.2 Career Progression

Throughout the stories of the late-career teachers there are defining experiences that signaled directional changes in their career paths. These experiences often, but not always, involved promotion or relocation, and served to alter their perceptions of their performance in their roles. Each experience was part of their career progression and provided the teacher with some indicator of their *achievement* in their work.

9.2.1 Early Career

Early career stories tell of young people whose main focus is securing a job. This motivation is related to one of the lower level needs of Maslow's hierarchy (Maslow, 1970), that of 'safety', which for these young people is employment security.

Cleo made an early choice as a secondary school student to become a teacher. Before completing her tertiary studies she showed an awareness of the workings of what she called 'the system' as well as her determination to be a teacher. She completed her degree early to increase her chances of winning a position.

I had already applied to the Education Department, but at the time there was a glut of teachers, particularly in Humanities and I had doubled up on my units for the first semester so I would have been finishing ahead of the other graduates, so if there was a position available, I could get that. With that many teachers finishing you had to have some kind of foot in the door.

(Cleo, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

Thomas began his career in New Zealand where there was a shortage of teachers, and, after qualifying, he found himself being offered numerous jobs which provided a great sense of job security, but also heightened his self and professional esteem.

Richard and Simon on the other hand, had not always planned to become teachers.

I can't honestly say that I went to university and said I was going to be a teacher. It wasn't something that I pre-planned. I did start thinking about it in my final year of my degree and then obviously decided to do a Diploma of Education at Adelaide but I think I realised after spending probably five to six months teaching that I had something to offer the profession.

(Simon, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

It was their early experiences in finding casual employment that set them on their career path. It was the offer of continuation that gave them the confidence and the self esteem to pursue a teaching career.

The Department offered me another job, so I must have done a reasonable job. I just felt privileged to have a job. I wasn't thinking it was an appointment for the rest of my life, I was thinking it was great they were giving me that opportunity at that point, without the teaching qualification and giving me a go I suppose. I thought I was on a path.

(Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 2nd October 2003)

It was a one-year contract and the Principal at the time, at the end of the year, called me into his office and said 'Well, thank you very much, you've done a marvellous job but the contract is up and we will be looking for someone else'. I said 'That's fine.' as I was intending to go back and do more study anyway. But interestingly enough, he sent me off and I started to get ready to go back to Uni and the Deputy just spoke to him. She had a much better idea of what was happening in the school (obviously my opinion is going to be biased on that one)but she spoke to him and he called me back two days later and not only re-employed me, but made me the Year 9 Co-ordinator.

(Simon, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

These young teachers found some reassurance that they had been successful in their first placements through the continued job offers.

Cleo had the unique experience as a beginning teacher of starting midway through the school year and this as well as other favourable conditions facilitated her initiation to teaching career.

I would say it was a very kind way to introduce someone to teaching because I was only 0.7, I didn't have yard duty, didn't have a home group and possibly because they needed someone so quickly, I was treated with kid gloves. So it was a very positive experience rather than possibly what would have happened at the beginning of the year when everyone is running around and no one knows what anyone is doing and there's that uncertainty. For me everyone else was already slotted in.

(Cleo, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

The challenges that face neophytes are highlighted by Ayres's poetic description of the complexities of teachers' work, as quoted in Chapter Two. Cleo's experience suggests that easing teachers into schools in the middle of the year when classes are settled and other teachers are more available to mentor them combined with reducing their teaching load and relieving them of some of the extra non-teaching duties, could better facilitate *achievement* for beginning teachers who are confronted with these challenges.

9.2.2 Country Teaching

Two of the four participants had experiences relating to teaching in a rural school. Simon was initially appointed to a public country school as his first appointment but he did not stay due to a subsequent offer from a private school in the metropolitan area.

I actually started teaching at Burra and ended up only staying for two weeks. That was a community college with a principal who was actually very, very good but it was a more a financial sort of a stay at home type of decision.

(Simon, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August, 2003)

At this early stage in his career, Simon's financial considerations led him to forego the opportunity to work in a school that he considered to be very good.

Only Richard had any real country teaching experience. After completing his Graduate Diploma of Education, he was offered a country position. He accepted it with the encouragement of a peer who was already teaching in a country school.

I had a friend who had finished the year before and ended up in the Mid North for his first country appointment and he was really excited. He said, 'You'll love it and that's a great spot', and I thought, 'I don't know anything about the place'. We got a map out and found it. There was this little dot in the middle of Eyre Peninsula, and I think it had three thousand people or something, and it was obviously a farming community. There was no thought of 'Well, I'll turn that down, wait for another one', or, 'They should give me something near the city'. My attitude was, 'They've offered me something, I had better take it', and 'It will

be an adventure', and it was an adventure.

(Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

At such an early stage of his career, Richard felt gratitude for any opportunity to teach but in a small rural school, there is little professional support for a beginning teacher. This supports Dinham's (1996) concerns that schools in 'unfavourable' areas often have large numbers of beginning teachers who lack the support of experienced peers (p. 21).

Basically you are thrown in the deep end, out in the middle of nowhere, and you have to survive and work out what you're going to do, how you are going to assess, what you're going to present. You have very small classes, but the advantages of that, are that you can devote more time thinking about how you are going to do it, what you're going to do and what you need to talk to them about. And generally the kids that are choosing those subjects in those schools are very motivated. The first year I had girls who were very motivated and they were an absolute pleasure, worked really hard, and they got good marks, and it was really affirming that you had made this commitment to go out a long way away.

(Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

The advantage of the small class size allowed the new teacher the time and opportunity to establish himself in the classroom. The positive student response and ultimate success gave Richard a sense of *achievement* that affirmed his sacrifice to relocate to a remote worksite.

Dinham and Scott (2000) found that the isolation experienced in small schools along with the "culture-shock" of being in an unfamiliar socio-economic environment can be a source of dissatisfaction for teachers (p. 7). For each of his country teaching placements, Richard commented on whether the wider community had been welcoming, yet, even more important to him, had been the support of the teaching community.

The community was very supportive there, made you feel welcome. They wanted you to be part of sporting teams. They wanted you to mix, more so than a lot of places I mentioned. There was also a bunch of younger teachers who visited each other, supported each other emotionally with being away from friends and family.

The one downside of it is that you do lose contact with your friends in the city, and I did. Yet to come back very regularly, then you are going to lose contact with the community.

(Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

In a remote country school, his working and living context become one, and he valued both his social and professional affiliation with the community.

Having taught in both country and metropolitan schools, Richard was able to compare the different career opportunities in country areas. He had taught Mathematics and Physics in a country school, but he considered teaching these subjects in a city location to be an advancement in his career; 'a bigger responsibility'. He did however acknowledge the improved promotional opportunities in the country schools but at the same time, qualified the status of country experiences.

Lots of opportunities open up when you're in the country in small schools but they deal in different leadership. It's a different role to being in a city school like this (Horizon College) where, you deal with fifteen or so staff ... not three or four. It's a totally different kettle of fish. It is much easier to keep a handle on what's happening in a small country school.

(Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

He also perceived that the community of country locations may have afforded him more employment opportunities beyond the educational system.

They wanted to appoint me to Woomera to teach Physics, Maths and Biology. I suppose if I'd gone there, being with the 'Rocketry' people and all that sort of thing, I might have being able to find opportunities opening up with a physics background or even Pure Science if you're up in that part of the world. Mining Companies aren't too far away and you socialize with people, play sport; living out there and working, that may have opened up a different career path, with Geophysics, I had a bit of a background. Or I could have ended up working for a country family business, a fishing boat in Port Lincoln, and made a lot more money than teaching.

(Richard, Teacher Future Interview, 28th November 2003)

When Richard decided to return to the city, he was disappointed in the lack of recognition of his commitment to, and achievements in, his teaching. This made him reassess the value he had placed on his country experiences.

So I applied for various positions in Catholic schools back in the city, and to my horror, I didn't get some of them. After all this time working in the country and experiences of working with different groups that should count for something. In many ways, I felt like 'you hadn't really done anything'.

(Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

Richard's account raises issues for the appointment of city-born teachers to country locations. Just as the advice of his friend had encouraged him, Richard's balanced account of the positive and negative aspects of country teaching would be important information for young teachers considering country appointments. Overall, Richard's story highlighted some contradictions about the career achievement opportunities and the nature of the social and professional environment that exist for teachers in country schools.

9.2.3 Personal and Family Influences

Many decisions about the teachers' career progressions are directly related to important personal experiences of getting married, having children, family responsibilities and, emotional and financial stability.

While working in New Zealand, Thomas considered potential worksites based on their proximity to his wife's work and his relocation to Australia in the late 1980s was to enable his wife to accept a job offer there. On recollection, this decision was not a positive career move but he remains a permanent resident.

Coming over here, it was like a time warp. There was a time warp in the curriculum; there was a time warp in methodology.

(Thomas, Teacher Past Interview, 31st August 2003)

After three years teaching, Simon's career goals were to improve his teaching but his consideration for further study was diverted by other life challenges.

Basically my goals at that point were to become a better teacher would be it. If anything to possibly go back and improve in terms of qualifications even the fellow I was working with, had Honours in Biology and I didn't have that so I felt that somewhere down the track there would be a need to improve qualifications. Even then I didn't follow up, which is unfortunate. I think any other ambitions would have been more of a private nature rather than a professional nature. Obviously once you get married you have got other responsibilities, financial responsibilities.

(Simon, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

The further qualifications of a colleague stimulated Simon's future intentions to return to study but these did not eventuate. There was no provision for Simon to improve his qualifications within the conditions of his employment. The decision would require him to invest his own time and money to achieve this and his personal life was a higher priority at this stage in his life.

Several teachers had identified that after six or seven years in a school or position, a teacher begins to seek new challenges.

I just thought after seven years I needed a change and I was in a position to be able to do that. I was more financially secure; we had our first child then, but he was still quite young and financially you are not as committed as with teenagers. It was only for a temporary position and I applied for it anyway. I thought I would impress at the interview and when the interview finished I just wanted to know after going through the process if there was an opportunity for the job to become permanent. If not of course I would stay where I was because I was not going to give up my current full-time position but I did want to work here because it is close to home. It was a progression when I came here and in some ways you feel it is an even better progression because you are working in what you would consider a better environment or a better school.

(Simon, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

Simon was able to achieve the balance between his personal and professional needs. The new position offered the needed change and his current financial position allowed him to do it. The move also afforded Simon a sense of *achievement*, as he considered his new workplace to be a ‘better school’.

Simon’s experience supported Dinham’s (1996) suggestion that ‘teacher transfer can be invigorating’ (p. 23). Dinham also expressed his concern for the lack of mobility that is associated with the current ageing teaching population and, in fact, Simon, as a mature teacher, admitted to being ‘too comfortable’ to pursue a promotional position in a different school. While relocation was a motivating career move for Simon as a young teacher, he was not prepared to change schools late in his career, even for a promotional opportunity.

As a young teacher, at a similar stage in his career, Richard was also looking for a change.

After six years in a place, you start to get into a real routine, quite comfortable. At this point in my life I had to decide if I was going to spend the rest of my life in the country or go back to the city. I felt like I needed a change, my parents were elderly. They are still fit and well, but at that point I thought I should get a bit closer to them and I wanted to get a bit closer.

(Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

Richard’s story suggested that his need for *influence* and *affiliation* were well-met in his current work context but possibly not his sense of *achievement*. Despite his relative contentment in his working life, he felt a need for change and his personal situation ultimately prompted a change of direction. Again it is the balance between the two priorities of personal and professional life that allows him to consider career change. It is, however, a difficult decision to move schools, particularly from a worksite where the teacher feels that most of his needs are being met.

I’m always indecisive about big decisions. In fact I went back and spoke to the Principal over there about it and she said, ‘Well, write a list of pros and cons’. I was quite happy where I was. I wasn’t unhappy. I didn’t think, ‘Well I want to

move to get away from a particular issue, from a particular thing'. It was a pleasant place to work and live, except it was a long way from Adelaide, but the school used to pay for us to fly back occasionally to do conferences and to catch up with people, so I didn't have a big issue, so it was hard to make that decision. Going into something new is always a big change and there are always pros and cons but I must have been thinking that I needed a change because I had applied for various jobs.

(Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

Research conducted by Wilson, Powney, Hall and Davidson (2006) into teachers' career progress revealed the lack of succession planning and suggested that at 'critical development points', teachers needed advice and support in choosing their most appropriate course of action (p. 251). Richard's uncertainty is clearly evident in his story. Fortunately his principal was able to facilitate his decision making, supporting additional findings of the earlier study that school managers are pivotal to teachers' access to career opportunities (p. 249).

While there are common threads highlighting the delicate balance between professional and personal lives in all the stories, Cleo's memories as a mother and a teacher are expressed more passionately. Cleo chose teaching as her career and her personal and professional lives have progressed, inextricably intertwined but managing a career and a family creates tensions in itself. Financial pressures, maternal feelings of guilt and the demanding nature of the work and the extra demands of the workplace cause conflict particularly for women, when making career decisions. Healy (1999) states that 'the concept of "choice" is too crude to fully understand the constrained conditions that women meet in the mothering phase' (p.199).

I was forced to come back financially before the end of the year, so she was born in February, 1990 and I was back for fourth term which I was not happy about and I was given quite a heavy load when I got back because, the Headmaster at the time didn't believe that mothers should work. I was given senior classes and expected to turn up to all of the extra-curricular nights and I was given sport.

(Cleo, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

In addition to her guilt and conflict, Cleo felt the disapproval of the principal in her decision to return to work and believed that no concession was made for her personal situation as an added incentive for her to remain home. There is no indication that Cleo received any career or personal counselling to resolve her ethical dilemma. She was called to a re-entry interview with the principal and felt that she had to defend her decision.

When I applied to come back I was called in for an interview, even though I said that I probably would be back before the end of the year, and I was asked why I was coming back if I had a child at home and I said it wasn't really a decision I took lightly. Financially, we needed two wages and it was almost questioned that maybe my life style could've been cut back a little bit rather than come back to work. I was given the feeling that the people who had replaced me, were being displaced by me, even though I had only been away for those nine months.

(Cleo, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

Her *affiliation*, and also her self esteem, was threatened as she perceived that her values as a mother were questioned and that the teachers replacing her were given a higher priority. But Cleo felt that this reaction by management might also have been financially driven.

It was ironic that the headmaster at the time, had pushed through the new legislation that if you haven't worked a full year, you didn't get your Christmas holiday pay, that's when the Award came through. Because I had only worked the one term, I only received only the one week of holiday pay, and that is what had actually pushed me to come back earlier. Normally you'd get the whole holiday pay and that would have put us back in black.

(Cleo, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

The particular conditions for school teachers' non-teaching and holiday periods raise issues about salary payments. The structures for payment have significantly influenced Cleo's life decisions and altered the balance of her personal and professional priorities. There is no indication of the source of Cleo's information regarding these salary changes

or the accuracy of the details. However, this event did coincide with the teacher award restructuring events of the 1990s that have been discussed by Seddon (1996). Nevertheless, Cleo's understanding of the conditions at that time led to a career decision that caused considerable tension for her and an obvious sense of distrust in the motive of her employer.

There were other staff who had taken time off for maternity leave, and they had asked to come back part-time and had been told there wasn't any part-time available and three of us got together and were quite happy to go 0.6, 0.7, we were all in Humanities, to create two jobs, two teaching positions out of the three of us and we were told, no, that wouldn't happen.

(Cleo, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

Cleo recalls experiences of the College being unwilling to accommodate the needs of the employees, (women and mothers) but did not relate any reason that may have been given for these decisions. The school's unwillingness to compromise implied to Cleo that the teachers were not valued employees and this affected her professional confidence and, hence, her sense of *achievement*. Cleo's stories have a strong theme of injustice aimed particularly at management and her memories from this time prohibit a sense of full *affiliation* with the community. Still vivid in Cleo's memory is the huge regret for the compromise she made to her mothering role when she felt compelled to return to work with her first baby, but by the time she was expecting her second child, she was in a position to make a different decision.

I had so regretted not being home with my first child and I remember leaving work in tears for that whole last term and even though I knew she was in really good care, (she went to my parents-in-law every day), just knowing the next year, even if she walked and I wasn't there, that would really get to me, it was shattering. So missing out on the little mile-stones and that sort of developmental thing where you know that if you've missed something, it's not going to be there the second time. We had planned a little bit better, and we knew that financially, we could do it.

(Cleo, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

Due to Maternity and Parenting Leave entitlements for both Cleo and her partner, they shared three years' leave to care for their young family. My own parenting story reveals the stresses and challenges of managing a dual role.

When I joined the College in 1988 as a part-time employee, I had a one year old son. I worked on the primary campus (Year 4 to 8) where there was more timetable flexibility for part-time employment. I continued to work part-time almost continuously over the next five years, having two more children and even managing to continue to breastfeed. I found this an extremely demanding time. It was my wish to work and have a parenting role, as full as possible. Teaching two or three hours every day allowed me to spend considerable time with my children as well. When I relocated to the senior campus of the College where Cleo and I now work, my family was older but I was dissatisfied with my part-time arrangements and had to repeatedly negotiate for a more equitable timetable. In the past, most teachers on the senior campus had been male and there had been few requests for part-time work. The secondary school timetable was not designed to allow flexible working hours and the management were very reluctant to make this a priority. I always felt I was creating a problem and felt pressure to either accept the inequitable schedule or go fulltime.

In their study of teachers' work, Dinham and Scott (2000) found that teachers were finding that their work was 'increasingly spilling over' into their personal lives (p. 8). Cleo's concern was the personal sacrifices required of teachers in order to meet the expectations of employment, such as, family time lost when organising extra-curricular activities which, until recently, was a compulsory condition of employment.

After having completed seventeen years of extra-curricular, I think that the time has come for me to devote myself to my own children on Saturday morning and after school. If we're talking about the kids having sport after school, I don't believe it has to be the teacher that took them for English or Maths or Science that should do it. We are now, in that sense, very much a business and I think there should be someone paid to do it.

(Cleo, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

Critical of the encroaching 'marketplace' ethic in educational systems as described by Smyth and Shacklock (1998), teachers are beginning to question some of the former goodwill they felt towards their work. The principle most teachers had to resolve was whether this extra-curricular commitment was part of their professional duty, and it is Cleo's belief that this is not so. In 2004, there were in fact industrial issues relating to this requirement in private schools and regardless of the outcome of the industrial actions within the system, Horizon College made a workplace agreement with staff. In 2005, staff participation in extra-curricular activities did become voluntary with those choosing to participate being paid an honorarium for their services. Employees at Horizon were aware that this arrangement was not the case in many of the other private schools. Consequently, this decision was met with some gratitude by the teachers who recognised that the employers had shown unusual consideration for the teachers in terms of their workloads and recognition of the professional nature of teachers' work.

Dinham (1995) identified that veteran teachers were less inclined to be involved in the extra-curricular activities of schools as they aged. Cleo's reluctance is related to the out of hours commitment required at the expense of her family life and its lack of significance to her teaching vocation. These concerns, however, were shared by many colleagues at that time and were not specifically related to ageing teachers. These activities are not included within the scheduled working hours of the school day and as such contribute to the work intensification of all teachers.

With regard to parental obligations, the employment conditions of teaching provide parents with the opportunity to spend the school holidays with their family. As a mother and someone who believes very strongly in the responsibilities of parenting this has been a major consideration for Cleo. Yet this positive work condition for families did not feature in the work stories of the men. Cleo described how her changing personal situation affected her enthusiasm for teaching throughout her career.

My enthusiasm in the beginning was quite high, everything was new and exciting and experimental and then after, probably around ten years, which would have coincided with my own children, I found that my priorities changed and I went and did my work as a job. Now that the drains on my time are a little less from my

family, I am probably more enthusiastic in the last few years than I have been for a time. I think you do go through that slump.

(Cleo, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

Quite contrary to the literature that has suggested a decline in enthusiasm in late-career teachers, Cleo found that lessening personal demands afforded a revival in her engagement with her career.

In three interviews, Cleo never voiced a desire to seek a position of responsibility even though she displays leadership qualities in her role in the Social Committee and within her faculty. Johnson and Kardos (2005) claimed that this was characteristic of the retiring generation of teachers who began in the 1960s and 1970s, focusing their careers on becoming better teachers within the classroom instead of seeking administrative positions. One wonders, however, whether the interplay between her family and teaching responsibilities have affected her promotional aspirations. Wilson and others (2006) state that ‘having children appears to have a deleterious effect on women’s careers’ (p. 252). Healy (1999) suggested that whether women’s careers do progress after returning from family leave, depends on ‘the degree of change, labour market conditions and the particular patterns of organisational discrimination’(p. 186). This certainly seems apparent in Cleo’s situation. Family considerations feature prominently in the past stories of the male teachers as well but generally in terms of job location and employment security not in relation to promotional decisions.

9.2.4 Valued Career Experiences

Official promotions and positions of responsibility mark the career progressions of teachers but the cultures of schools also create additional valued experiences that mark the advancement of teachers in their vocation and afford the teachers a sense of *achievement*. While the nature of the valued experiences varies according to both the teacher and the context of their work, some common threads emerged.

There is evidence in all four career histories of teachers noting their progression from junior to senior classes as a career achievement. The view exists within secondary

schools that the senior classes are more prestigious and more important and so are staffed with the 'better' teachers. Other natural career progressions were considered to be expanding teaching experiences into new and different subject areas or contemporary topics. Participants valued experiences in different systems, geographical and social areas, and in single sex and co-educational schools as part of their growth as teachers, although, as noted previously, this is not necessarily formally acknowledged as valuable career experience within the educational system.

While these variable opportunities are important formative experiences for the younger teachers, the ambitions of the experienced teachers focus more on the art of teaching, rather than the subject or level taught.

I would like the senior classes, but there are people here who are on the beginning of their career path at the moment who are more important than me, and terms of the skills that they will need for their futures. Of course, there is a perception that if you are teaching junior classes, that's a very stationary thing, but I don't see it that way. I see them as a different challenge.

(Thomas, Teacher Future Interview, 30th May 2004)

The accountability that is associated with teaching Year 12 classes is considered undesirable to late-career teachers.

I would probably not want to teach Year 12 again simply because of the time demands and the stresses associated with it and particularly here, the accountability that is so subjective. The fine-line with something like Design and Drama which are creative in the sense that if you try and push kids too hard they will actually back up and you won't get anything. It's not like writing an essay where you can sit down and say, 'Right now, you just go through your grammar or you do this', they actually have to be able to perform at a creative level and you do end up with a lot of Prima Donna syndrome and they do not own their own success and failure.

(Cleo, Teacher Future Interview, 16th January 2004)

Cleo feels that the responsibility of student success rests with her. She feels that students

take little responsibility for their achievement and this is compounded by the creative, subjective nature of her subject area where she has limited control of the quality of student product. Teachers reject the external assessment of students as a measure of teacher effectiveness and achievement because to do so denies the complexities of teachers' work.

Teachers of Year 12 subjects in my department are very anxious that their teaching effectiveness will be measured solely by their students' results in external assessment. They want discussions about student results to encompass more factors than just teachers' performance, such as students' aptitude for and application to study, parental support, school structures including timetable, course and personal counselling for students. At Horizon, recognition is given to teachers of Year 12 students with perfect scores but most times, my teachers feel a bigger sense of achievement for their part in the borderline passes of students that otherwise would have failed. There is no public recognition of this achievement but it is something we try to celebrate as a department.

One of the measures of *achievement* valued by teachers is the level of professionalism in their workplace. Moving to a school with a more professional approach is also considered to be career advancement for teachers.

I found it to be a probably to be a little more of a professional environment so I suppose in my own mind considered it was a step up.

(Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

It was a very well run school. I found the teachers here were very professional probably a bigger tradition, a tradition at least more visible than my previous school. So after a short time here, I was thinking this was certainly an advancement.

(Simon, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

To gain a sense of *achievement* in the workplace, these teachers set, pursued and assessed their own professional challenges. The participants all felt that their quest for challenges linked to the needs of the students, was the key to remaining engaged and

motivated throughout their career progression. Richard talked of seeking career challenges (Richard, Teacher Present Interview, 2nd October 2003).

I think constantly trying to challenge myself in a way. You get to a point in any setting where everything becomes routine and comfortable, that happens to me after about six or seven years and trying to challenge myself, I have applied for leadership positions in other schools and universities during that time and, that's part of the idea of challenge by changing. Great opportunities become more likely.

He recognises the importance of taking risks in the classroom and the sense of *achievement* he gains from that, independent of his own assessment of its success.

Days when certain things you do, work really well, and you've got a smile on your face, and you think 'That was gutsy'. You tried that, and it worked, or 'It was gutsy to try and it didn't work, but at least I had a go'. Just keeping things in perspective, I suppose that's what I look for. This is a protection against going through the motions, just getting into a rut, repetition, familiarity, boredom with the content, tiredness just physical tiredness.

These experienced teachers speak of a commitment to seeking their own professional challenges which seems contrary to Dinham's (1996) assertions that late-career teachers 'limit the adoption of new ideas and innovation' (p. 21). The recent experiences of change for these teachers at Horizon, as discussed in Chapter Eight, suggest that they may be resistant to the change process experienced in the workplace, rather than the action of changing. Senge (1993) aptly asserts that 'people do not resist change, they resist being changed' (p. 155).

The teachers satisfy their need for *achievement* through the change and variety in their work offering them new challenges. While Cleo shares this belief, it seems contradictory that she taught for over twenty years in the one school. This, again, raises the issue of mobility for the engagement of experienced teachers.

I actually thought about whether I wanted to change schools. I've been here twenty years now, and thinking about it, pros and cons, I realized that the school itself has changed so much over twenty years that I'm no longer in the same

school I started off in, even the last ten. Each year a percentage of the staff, fifteen to twenty percent change around me, so I'm really working every five years with, extensively a lot of new people anyway. So changing for the reasons of staff or personality or whatever doesn't really exist. The school has good resources, probably middle of the road if we are looking at private schools and I've been long enough but I don't need to establish a rapport with kids. After a few years I did not need to establish my discipline anymore, so really I'm able to concentrate on teaching itself.

(Cleo, Teacher Future Interview, 16th January 2004)

The College enrolment history, with student numbers increasing by up to a hundred percent in the 1990s, supports Cleo's experiences of change and growth with the College's staff turn-over uncharacteristic of many private schools. The demographics of the College have been fluid since this period, with student populations drawn from broader growth-suburbs, increased student numbers, and more female and refugee students. Combined with the great variation in Cleo's teaching areas and levels over the years, she has been able to maintain her interest and challenge while feeling secure working in a school with which she is familiar. Having established herself in the community also affords Cleo a certain level of *influence* as someone privy to the history and evolution of the College. Despite being in the same school from beginning teacher to experienced practitioner, Cleo's career history has not lacked significant experiences, as evident in her parenting stories, and others discussed below. These adventures, although not all positive, have served to raise Cleo's level of consciousness regarding her commitment to her vocation and, hence, her engagement with her school.

What is evident for all these teachers is that they have been aware of, and responsible for, their own progression, seeking challenges in their work to satisfy their need for *achievement*, as a way to remain engaged and motivated.

9.2.5 Positions of Promotion and Responsibility

The teachers' commitment to their workplaces and their careers has been significantly affected by their access to roles of responsibility and seniority. These experiences are

related to both their *influence* in the work context and their sense of *achievement*.

Job or role offers are, indeed, strong motivators for teachers. Several schools offered Thomas a position when he first graduated, as mentioned earlier, and despite the fact that there was a shortage of teachers, these offers still provided him with heightened self and professional esteem. In contrast, when he relocated to Australia, there was a glut of teachers and he remains very proud of the fact that he was appointed from New Zealand without meeting the College Principal.

I was quite happy because I was the first person he really employed without seeing; just two or three interviews over the phone with various members of the hierarchy.

(Thomas, Teacher Past Interview, 31st August 2003)

Besides positions and appointments being important, roles of responsibility also provide teachers with a feeling that they are progressing in their career.

We were just putting together a national version of the Maths certificate, so I was involved heavily in that. I suppose at that stage I was running it but I'm just thinking back on those years. I was actually in charge at that stage of my profession.

(Thomas, Teacher Present Interview, 26th October 2003)

Although Thomas still recalls this significant career achievement with pride, he is mindful that it was at a different stage of his career and currently, I am unaware of this being drawn on or recognised by the College.

A large part of Simon's self esteem and confidence in teaching has been due to the numerous positions of responsibility that others have approached him to apply for or accept. He, in fact, uses the term a 'sense of *achievement*' to describe his reaction.

With these sorts of things that keep coming your way, you do have a sense of achievement I suppose, rather than just teaching for 20 years. You do tend to have a higher self-esteem whilst these things are coming in your direction. ...Probably

the one thing that meant that I stayed was the fact that I was offered this role, also a promotion, and it was almost a vote of confidence.

(Simon, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003)

Just as winning a position affirms teachers, missing out leads to them reassessing their career progression. Richard related his experience of an unsuccessful job application that resulted in a significant career change (Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003).

I applied for a job as a Physics teacher and I got a bit peeved because a person from Adelaide actually got that appointment, won that position. I thought, you know, 'I've done a couple of years here. I reckon I should have preference over her to get that position'.

This was more than just a missed job opportunity, affecting his sense of *achievement* in his work. It flagged a trust and loyalty issue related to this teacher's *affiliation*. The lack of recognition for his service prompted him to seek employment in a private school, in a system where he already had some association.

Then the job at a private school came up in Pt. Lincoln, and I thought, 'Oh well, I'll go for that, I'm Catholic. I've been to Catholic schools and I know what they're all on about' and so I went for that.

The fact that he did not seek to find another promotional position but instead chose a sideways movement to a teaching position in another system, signifies the dissatisfaction with the *affiliation* and, possibly, the lack of *influence* he experienced in the other school system.

In his new appointment to the city, like Simon, Richard experienced the affirmation of being offered positions of responsibility by the Principal.

She obviously thought I was OK. She offered me opportunities to develop my leadership skills and to work with groups of people. I was on Occupational Health

and Safety committees. I was on all sorts of committees there, and she believed in that sort of structure and I probably fitted into that quite well at that point of time.

Besides promotional positions, added responsibilities were welcomed as career achievements and indicators of his *influence* in this work setting, and this attributed to his strong association with the school. There is significant evidence to suggest that the attainment of added responsibility served to engage the teachers with their workplace and also enhanced their professional esteem, meeting all three human needs.

I guess the feeling that you have leadership qualities that are appreciated and you're given the opportunity to use those qualities in given roles has always been a positive and has always made me feel like I want to be involved and engaged.

In the absence of this confirmation, teachers will begin to doubt their abilities and often redirect their career paths. In this case, Richard believed he had the attributes to become a student counsellor to such an extent that he undertook additional study.

I did study in Educational Counselling. I thought I might like to work as a Counsellor in schools. I think I've got good listening skills, I am fairly empathetic and people say I'm a nice person. When I first applied for the jobs back into Adelaide I applied for Counselling at my old school. Unfortunately I missed out on that job but for some reason I stopped applying. I might have applied for two but I basically thought, 'Well I'm not meant to do that'.

His original self-belief faltered quickly with two unsuccessful job applications and he showed no persistence in pursuit of this new career direction. This could be a 'critical development point' in Richard's career as termed by Wilson and others (2006, p. 251), suggesting that he would have benefited from professional career advice either in continuing his efforts or even whether he should pursue that path in the first place.

Accepting positions of responsibility affected these teachers. Thomas, Richard and Simon enjoyed and valued their experiences in leadership roles however, poor structuring of the role can make the position both stressful and unsatisfying. Thomas described how a management decision requiring teachers to become multi-disciplined in order to solve a staffing problem had an adverse effect on his role as Head of

Department in the early 1990s.

Basically there wasn't a Department. I am a pretty good ideas man. I reckon I'm very good at nutting through it, particular approaches to problems, how to solve them, how to deal with them but in terms of the actual putting those into place, it's nice to have someone else to help do that job, to have someone to organize. With supportive people I was able to achieve quite a bit and I have taken the departments I have been involved in, a long way forward. I found this department very, very frustrating. I had a number of people who were taking one or two Maths classes only. This was the time when there was fall in enrolments so there were no new teachers being appointed. Management had the idea that people should be multi-disciplined. In some ways making sure a person leaving didn't create a hole.

(Thomas, Teacher Present Interview, 26th October 2003)

Thomas considered the frustration in his leadership role was due to the College's employment strategies which had led to a non-specialised department that lacked collaboration and unified purpose.

In the late 1990s, Simon related how restructuring the leadership roles within the College had created an unmanageable position. Having enjoyed a previous leadership role, he compared how the demands of the restructured position caused him stress that was uncharacteristic (Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003).

Head of the Science Department has been quite a good experience and fairly enjoyable, but being the Head of Maths, Science and Technology, which was very, very large, and then trying to balance that with your teaching — that does create stress, and in that particular case I felt more stressed than any other time in my teaching career. It really was two diverse roles. It was half the staff basically and it was difficult trying to cover curriculum issues and trying to come up with in-service. Actually I think I did a reasonable job at it if I may say so myself. Things like bringing in videos and guest speakers and that took a bit of time. I realised the role itself was way too vast and I should have thought a little more carefully about choosing it. You had deposed seniors in the group and you had

Technology teachers mixed in with Maths. There was a lot of animosity between staff in Departments then too, so there was a lot to deal with.

I was part of that department at the time and although there were some concerns from staff about the role, teachers were very satisfied with Simon's leadership.

At this particular time, the College chose to reorganise the middle management, reducing the number of positions of responsibility, the reason for which was uncertain. Simon found performing in one of these new roles to be a stressful experience, and eventually this caused him to reassess his consideration of future positions of responsibility.

It was planned poorly by the administration (management), and shouldn't have been a role for one person anyway. So yes, there was dissatisfaction, and I suppose in a sense, a turning point. Of all the other leadership roles that I have taken on, that was one where I felt I wasn't in control, or I couldn't give the best that I had to give.

Both Thomas and Simon thought that the structural changes were made without considering the manageability of the roles, the consequent adverse effects for the teachers and ultimately, the learning outcomes in the College.

Accepting a well-structured role in middle management, however, is a motivating opportunity for experienced teachers. Simon acknowledged the benefits of his experience in positions of responsibility, particularly in understanding human nature, politics and relational issues which exist in the school. Nevertheless his choice in recent times has been to forego opportunities in middle management. He has redirected his focus and energy to classroom teaching, shifting the priorities in his vocation back to the students and the classroom experiences. He is adamant that his performance in this area is compromised when he undertakes a management role. The two roles are in conflict and there is no doubt in his mind where his first priority lies.

You've some ideas for a lesson and you just don't have the time to actually prepare that lesson the way you would want it to come across with your students but it really is a situation where it's a balancing act all the time and sometimes you

don't get the balance right. The main reason why I am here is to be a good teacher and anything else after that really is just me helping the school out... I made a conscious decision that goes back over a few years to make teaching a priority. I will only do the leadership stuff if it suits and if I've got something to offer.

For this reason, Simon believes that there is some value for tenure in roles in middle management.

I think there is a certain amount of time that you stay in the position where you offer what you can then you know you need to look for others that might have strengths in other areas, might have a little more vigour, might have a little more enthusiasm. I think it's good for a situation to be dynamic, assuming that you can find the right people.

Simon believes that new leaders bring different ideas and renewed enthusiasm to the positions, but the success of a rotating system of leadership relies on the depth of leadership skills existing within the department and a culture of shared leadership.

The male participants in this study admitted that, as early career teachers, they saw their paths leading to promotional positions. They considered classroom teaching as a single career level and that for progression they needed to seek promotion that would take them out of the classroom. There was at that time, and to some extent still is, a flat career structure for classroom teachers where 'the job description for a thirty-year veteran and a novice teacher are virtually identical' (Johnson & Kardos, 2005, p. 10). The definition of ambition and success as a teacher has changed for Thomas on his career journey.

I suppose I would have had visions of being in power. Not so much necessarily for the reasons of professional development as much as status. Now I see status as more associated with what you do rather than a particular job or position that you have. I would have started off thinking, 'These are the steps I would like to get to' but with teaching I have now figured out what it is all about in terms of advanced job description.

(Thomas, Teacher Future Interview, 30th May 2003).

Thomas so eloquently describes career progression, unmarked by pay steps or positions

of responsibility, but determined by the professional development of a classroom teacher acquiring an 'advanced job description'. Like the teachers in Smulyan's (2004) research who 'redefine success and achievement in their own terms' (p. 539), Simon concluded our discussion about career achievements with some very strong opinions about what success means to a classroom teacher (Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003).

I think it's crucial, absolutely crucial, not to get too caught up in something like a leadership role within a school, when one chooses, I use this word vocation, chooses the vocation of teaching. Sometimes there's this opinion that you haven't succeeded unless you've reached this particular level. I don't subscribe to that, and sometimes that actually affects the relationship I have with people that think that way. To me, you've succeeded if you're enjoying yourself, if you teach well, you've got the respect of your peers and you've got the respect of the people that you're teaching. That's success. I don't need to have a position in a school to feel successful. Now maybe I have just convinced myself of that but if I have, then that's great.

This is an opinion that strengthened as the participants' careers progressed. Simon feels so strongly about these values that he acknowledges that other's conflicting opinions can affect his sense of *affiliation*. He is very clear about what is important and should be valued in teachers' work

The Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) award was established by Australian education systems with the intention of rewarding superior teaching skills in the classroom, and so should be considered a positive career step by experienced teachers. Two of the four participants are Advanced Skills Teachers and, yet, they never referred to the AST award as a position that they held or a role they played in the school. Ingvarson and Chadbourne (1997) stated that the generic nature of the criteria for ASTs were too broad to identify the advanced knowledge and skills of classroom teachers and, hence, provided teachers with 'little basis for a sense of achievement at having reached another milestone in their teaching career' (p. 13). The insignificance of this award to these participants substantiates the criticisms from Shacklock, Smyth and Hattam (1998) concerning its credibility amongst teachers.

I have encouraged several of my faculty members to apply for the award and on each occasion encountered the reservations from the teachers that Shacklock, Smyth and Hattam (1996) reported from their research. The teachers felt that they were worthy of the award but lacked the confidence to prepare their application. They felt that they could not satisfy the presumed theoretical component of the assessment. I convinced them to apply by clarifying the nature of the process, supplying copies of other successful applications and proof-reading theirs. To date they have all been successful.

There has been criticism that the AST status which was intended to recognise excellence in teaching, also involved additional non-teaching duties (Ingvarson & Chadbourne, 1997, p. 14). This is not the case at Horizon where, other than a salary increase, there is little change in work conditions for teachers as a consequence of receiving the award. While there are no extra responsibilities, neither is there public recognition for the recipient and so it fails to be a valued career achievement. The dilemma for the school is that to promote the award as desirable and valued, would increase the number of applications. This would cause more work in the administration of the assessment process for AST applicants and ultimately an increased teacher salary cost, neither of which are incentives for the College.

9.2.6 Career Futures

In the final interview with the participants, they were asked to speculate on the career futures that they could foresee or that they had already planned for themselves. Their intentions give some indication of the contribution these teachers see themselves making in their schools as they approach retirement when their vast experience and expertise will be lost to the profession.

Richard was the only participant who considered a leadership position as part of his future. Over the course of this study, several tenured leadership positions became vacant. Simon did not re-apply for his promotional position, whereas Richard, who had not had a leadership position for several years, decided that he would do so. Richard divulged that it had been his reflective experiences as a participant in this research that had

prompted him to consider the position. Sharing his career history in the interviews served to remind him of the positions of responsibility that he had held in the past and the rewards associated with those experiences. He was able to visualise himself in a leadership role again, and so was encouraged to apply for a Head of Department position that was advertised at Horizon during the time that he was a participant in the research.

Richard, winning a middle management role, was excited by the prospect (Richard, Teacher Future Interview, 28th November 2003).

I'm looking forward to next year, I'm working as Science Coordinator and seeing how that goes working with organizing people and changing curriculum. So it will be exciting and quite demanding. I'm really focused on that and the challenges that that will throw up and making sure that I do the best I can in that role.

He views cautiously, however, the possibility of further advancement as he prepares to embark on his new role.

I've been appointed for four years unless something else happens or comes along. I might consider it, but at the moment that's really my focus.

The other three participants are planning a future where their classroom teaching features strongly. Simon is clear about his priorities and is committed to maintaining his 'life balance', making his teaching his first priority. It is therefore not surprising that he claims to hold no real vision for his future. However, one could interpret this to mean that he no longer sets fixed, specific targets, such as gaining promotional positions, as checkpoints on his career path. As a young teacher he held visions of rising up the 'educational hierarchy', but now holds different priorities when making decisions regarding his career progression (Simon, Teacher Future Interview, 29th February 2004).

I think in the last maybe five or six years, I tend to just float along and make decisions on the basis of whether I've enjoyed doing that particular task or wanted that particular role. I've no set plan. I have decided that no matter what happens from here on in, I'm not going to do things if I don't feel like they're going to benefit me, develop me, or make me feel good about myself.

This self-centred approach is possibly related to his experience as Head of Mathematics, Science and Technology, a position that he took at the request of the College as they considered him to be the best person for this unmanageable role. He found the demands of the job unreasonable and now is emphatic that his future career choices will be made based primarily on his own welfare. The future career direction for this experienced teacher will be in his own best interests. While this seems contradictory to the child-centred ideology of the College, Simon believes that it will also be in the best interests of the students and the whole learning community if he maintains his life-balance and feels positive about his job.

The continued career progression for Thomas involves further development as a practising classroom teacher (Thomas, Teacher Future Interview, 30th May 2003).

I'd like to continue to evolve and do the job properly. I suppose that is a plan. I don't think I have any career moves in mind if that's what's meant.

Thomas often speaks about 'the job' rather than teaching, signifying a broader perspective of his role. His pathway is not described by roles or positions he might acquire but the services he might undertake.

I am trying to do what I consider to be a good job for kids in this school and helping out people where I can. Keeping up with the best way of teaching for the particular group that you have, choosing the right resources for their learning, making sure I am up with the technology, making sure that the environment that they are working in is reasonably clean and tidy and safe. When other teachers need help, being available to them to informally talk about students or ways of dealing with particular people...

The future intentions of these experienced teachers suggest that they are motivated to further improve their classroom effectiveness and are prepared to work with other teachers to help them to do the same.

9.3 Performance Indicators

Some significant crossroads evident in the teachers' career stories were marked by

occasions when they experienced a form of assessment of their work performance. Beyond their initial probation as beginning teachers and intermittent appointments to promotional positions, the participants made no mention of any standard formal processes that monitored or evaluated their development as a teacher. There were, however, many lived experiences that teachers interpreted as positive and negative indicators of their performance. These, as measures of their *achievement*, served to engage and disengage them with their work.

9.3.1 Positive Performance Indicators

As discussed previously, the experiences of applying for promotion or new positions were occasions for teachers to appraise their development as teachers and a chance to gain feedback on how their achievements and performance were rated or valued. Even more encouraging, was being invited to apply for, or being offered, positions or opportunities to take more responsibility. Senge (1993) suggests that distributing challenging work assignments equitably shows a genuine effort to redistribute control and that by acknowledging all work that is well done, rather than a person's place in the hierarchy, develops different norms for rewards in the work place (p 101).

Throughout Simon's career he was often 'tapped on the shoulder' to take various responsibilities which he took as recognition of his leadership qualities (Simon, Teacher Future Interview, 29th February 2004).

The feeling that you have leadership qualities that are appreciated and you're given the opportunity to use those qualities in given roles has always been a positive and has always made me feel like I want to be involved and engaged, up to a point, of course, where I feel like I can contribute.

He felt appreciated and he valued the opportunity to use these skills. Note that Simon does not specifically mention the importance of gaining a position of responsibility; instead he cites the experiences as evidence of his *influence* in his professional community, and the opportunity for this, not the position, made him more involved and engaged with his work. Teachers, as a result of being asked to take special or difficult roles, often talked about their managers showing 'a vote of confidence' or feeling that

they ‘must have thought I was OK’.

The external recognition for Thomas’s department’s initiatives and their eventual influence within that educational system were very motivating experiences for him (Thomas, Teacher Past Interview, 31st August 2003).

We had a government allocation for extra help for our Polynesian group and we changed from taking kids out to actually putting an extra teacher to the class room. I suppose that was the beginning of that happening around the city. The Inspectors came in and saw, ‘Hey this is working pretty well. This is the way to go’. It’s a good use of the actual resource that rather than the kids being helped later with something they couldn’t do, they’re actually being helped at the time so, it’s a lot more significant. That was my argument and they agreed with me.

At a recent international conference on gifted education, Richard gained useful knowledge that informed his planning of teaching units, however, the experience also afforded him a more universal view of his vocation as a teacher. Although this experience was not directly related to Richard’s performance in the classroom, it did highlight the importance of his work and so gave him a heightened sense of *achievement*.

It was an eye-opener to see all these educators, from all over the world talking about gifted issues. You see politicians talking about it. I think as a professional, sometimes you just need a day where you can see politicians who are interested in what I’m doing. There are people that spend their whole life studying this particular aspect, and it raises your self-esteem in some ways that it’s an important job you do. Otherwise you’ll just get lost in your own little world of the classroom.

(Richard, Teacher Present Interview, 2nd October 2003).

Often in the ‘dailiness’ of the job that teachers performed within the insular context of their school, they are not reminded of the social interconnectedness of the education system to the whole global community. An awareness of the political and social significance of teachers’ work can be empowering and motivating. Besides the teachers’

own personal moral purposes in their endeavours, their sense of *achievement*, and *influence*, are greatly enhanced if their role is seen to have a global impact and is acknowledged as such.

Related to this point is the isolation of these teachers from the academic world. The four practitioners gave little indication that they are influenced in their work by current professional literature. In this school, highly selective readings are sometimes presented to teachers by management or presenters of professional development sessions, but very few teachers read professional journals on a regular basis. Only Simon mentioned reading scientific journals to update knowledge in his discipline and these are probably secondary to newspapers as a more accessible source.

I have to admit that a lot of my updating of material will come from reading journals, magazines and newspapers, even say something as simple as *The Australian* with the Health Section on the weekend, there is just so much material in there that is just right up-to-date and a lot of it is just summarizing you know scientific journals anyway.

(Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003)

None of the teachers referred to independently reading about professional practice.

One of the most significant experiences for me when I began my study was to find so much research about teachers' lives and the nature of their work. I had always felt that no-one understood what it is really like. As did Richard in his encounter with the politicians, my colleagues and I felt encouraged that there was specific academic interest in our work and work experiences as seen from the teachers' perspective. My secondary reaction was to be angry to think that there was all that knowledge about the challenges and the unsupportive conditions surrounding our work and yet very little had changed in our workplace. In my student role, I also enjoy having immediate access to electronic journals and I have found that my colleagues are interested in reading some of the relevant articles I am able to find. Over time they have begun to approach me to find information for them on topics of interest.

9.3.2 Performance Management

It is not surprising that it is the negative experiences of performance management which have been remembered and recounted in the stories of the career progression of the teachers. The absence of any positive stories does not necessarily suggest that they were not part of their experiences, but possibly these were less noteworthy or memorable. Perhaps one could consider teachers' positive experiences with their mentors as the antithesis of the stories I am about to relate.

I admired the teachers for being prepared to share these stories with me as I am someone with whom they work each day. It was an admission that made them vulnerable and I believe they had the courage to share the story because of the mutual respect we share and also because they are secure in the fact that they have survived the experience of performance management, to emerge as a well-respected and effective teachers. These stories are intensely personal and while I hesitate to identify the teachers' voices, I feel it is important to recognise and validate their experiences.

Simon has always had a strong belief in his 'natural ability' as a teacher and has had few experiences where he has felt this has been seriously questioned. His experience, however, in an unmanageable managerial role caused him to question his effectiveness. Simon found the time when he was dealing with dysfunctional personal relationships between people in his department to be frustrating and unrewarding (Simon, Teacher Present Interview, 1st October 2003).

There were situations in some leadership roles where I felt things were not going well, when I felt that relationships with people could have been better, not necessarily with me and them, but between themselves and therefore helping in managing the department a little bit better. You think, 'Why do I bother?'

All three needs are not being met when the poor relationships indicate little *affiliation*, resulting in a reduction of Simon's effectiveness in running the department, his *achievement*, and his *influence* – 'Why do I bother?'. Despite the fact that Simon knew the role to be unmanageable he suffered from both stress and self-doubt.

The situations that when you stop and think, maybe I should have done this, or maybe I should have done that, that sometimes you might get a little bit down, self-esteem drops and you become a little disengaged but overall it isn't a big issue or a big problem, and thinking back over quite a few years, there is no major turning-point, the rot sets in slowly.

Simon also highlights that it is often not an isolated incident which leads to disengagement but the slow accretion of repetitive negative experiences. There is no indication in his story that he received support or guidance from his immediate manager in this role or indeed that he could expect any.

In one school, Richard had received numerous offers of positions of responsibility and this confirmed his effectiveness as a leader and his contribution to the school. This, then, made it difficult for him to accept the unanticipated criticism that was aired through the appraisal of his performance in a promotional position (Richard, Teacher Past Interview, 8th August 2003).

I was reviewed in my second year and I felt some of the things that some of my colleagues had written were insulting to put it mildly and a bit childish, not really very constructive and I think that upset me a bit. I felt that the principal didn't support me, and she had already decided who she wanted to do the role. It was her deputy's best friend who had decided she didn't like doing her old job, so she wanted to do this job. I was annoyed about the whole process and the whole situation and that was when I realised that I wanted a change.

Richard was hurt by the criticism of colleagues which had been aired only through the appraisal process, the lack of support from the principal and the unprofessional basis to the reappointment to the position. The outcome had a negative affect on Richard's sense of *achievement*. The process destroyed Richard's trust and sense of *affiliation* which he values strongly; so strongly, in fact, that he sought another position outside. While there was a formal appraisal process to assess Richard's performance in the role, it seems there were no prior formative experiences that provided feedback to him. Richard appears to have had little voice in the process and questions its validity. In addition, he has a sense of betrayal from the principal who previously had seemingly appreciated his

worth.

The stories which follow were both powerful and emotive experiences for both me and the participants. Even as the participants recounted the experiences after many years, the memories were still both raw and upsetting. The full stories were not told in one interview but continually emerged through different discussions as if they were determined to be heard. These are not to be interpreted as factual accounts of events, but rather the memories and perceptions of the teachers as they relived the experiences relating to the management of their work performance.

While some instances were shared over the duration of the interviews, the full extent of Cleo's negative experiences with management and the severity and long term impact were only made clear in the very last time that we met. The delay in finalising her provisional registration as a teacher, dissension over her assessment of a student teacher, non-negotiable relocation to the junior campus and management of her Work-cover have been negative experiences with management and management personnel which still affect her emotionally in the retelling. Cleo remembers being under supervision at one time where she thought they were, in her words, 'trying to squeeze me out' (Cleo, Teacher Future Interview, 16th January 2004).

I was observed. My Head of Department was put in the classroom next to me, and he would watch me through the fire door as I taught my classes. I was given classes of thirty two at Year 10 level and told I had to mark an essay a week. All my lesson plans were checked. They would collect my students' books without my knowing and go through them and I was told that I sat down too much in class.

McGregor (1985) claims that such an experience of formal evaluation accentuates an employee's dependence and 'thus readily arouses latent anxieties and hostilities' (p. 85). Cleo's memory of observations and 'long sessions in the Headmaster's office' are painful. On reflection, she feels she experienced a minor breakdown as a result. Her break from the College, due to maternity leave, afforded some respite and on her return she felt that attentions had been redirected elsewhere.

Collegial support was crucial during these early times and still played an important role

in conflicts with management that Cleo experienced later in her career. There were, however, more systemic supports available to her in recent times as well.

We are, because of incidents that happened, very sensitive and aware within our own groups of what's happening and no longer do people put up with it. They are more vocal. They will say what they think. They will rally around and support the person when they think that something unfair is happening. We also have more of a voice through the harassment policies that exist now, which were very new to this school. When I first started, in fact I would be surprised if we had one. So there are avenues now to follow, and there are enough precedents of people doing things to stick up for themselves, whether it's through the union or on their own bat, that makes it a stronger place.

In terms of Maslow's (1970) human needs, these instances might have been considered by Cleo as a threat to her basic need for safety. While there is some confidence in the policies and structures available to Cleo as an employee and a citizen to protect her in the future, this story raises some questions about the processes of accountability and performance management in schools. Cleo has bitter recollections of the feedback from management on the performance of her duties. The interventions seem to focus on monitoring the effectiveness or otherwise of her teaching practices, but she did not seem to relate this to any changes management were seeking in her performance, other than she needed to move around the classroom more during lessons. For Cleo these actions were more about making her unreasonably accountable through excessive vigilance. McGregor (1985, p. 84)) acknowledged that, if a superior is able to communicate negative judgments to a subordinate, this is likely to do serious damage to the relationship between them; this was certainly the case for Cleo. She considered the interactions to be personal and targeted.

All of the people who were involved had their own issues to deal with but I think the culture was such that it was allowed to happen and there would be six to eight staff who they successfully worked on and squeezed out, so they've got a success rate for it.

Most of Cleo's story focuses on the treatment of her as a person and a professional.

There is no evidence that teaching practices or students' learning were improved by these experiences. There is little doubt that they caused division and destroyed trust as well as damaging Cleo's professional and personal identity.

My defences were right up. I'd been worn down and my self-esteem was so low at that stage, I think I just couldn't have gone any lower.

These tensions remained unresolved. Subsequent suspicion and mistrust in management's intentions are apparent in her story.

I was called into the deputy's office and 'told' that I would be going down to the junior school for a semester, which, given the atmosphere at the time, was seen as a huge demotion (pause) and I was very upset. I was told I was a Drama specialist and they needed someone down there because in the second semester they were bringing Year 8 up to the senior campus. When I got there I actually taught English, Drama and History

The Junior Campus was a smaller school of the upper primary classes and there was a perception that it was not as well resourced, 'our poor little relation'. Cleo's feelings of being demoted were compounded by the surprise nature of the decision, which was delivered in the last few days of the school year, and by the lack of consultation with her about the move. This raised several questions for her. Several others were equally qualified for this position so why was she chosen? Why did they claim to need a Drama specialist when the position was for a general Humanities teacher? Why couldn't she commute between the two campuses as some teachers already did? But the decision had already been made and Cleo was left with fear and trepidation.

Oh I sat there, I could not move and it was because I had had a number of clashes with one of the management personnel and there were other people who were qualified who could have gone down. I would then be stuck entirely with Year 8, as a so-called specialist. That's what I started to worry about. I also remembered what happened to the Year 8 staff, who were secondary trained, had been employed at the Junior School and then basically left there for eight to ten years, after being told after a few years at the Junior School they would be moved up. In previous years we had a number of staff who had been squeezed out

professionally through their subjects no longer available, not enough numbers, whatever, and I did actually believe that it was the beginning of the end and that was also going to happen to me.

Although I knew the facts about Cleo's relocation, I was not aware of the emotional turmoil that she felt at the time. It all happened on the last day of the school year and then she was not on the same campus in the new school year. This meant that the discussions with friends and colleagues that normally would take place at such a time, did not.

Uncertain about her future, Cleo felt dis-empowered and had very little trust in the motives of management. Her memories of the experiences of other staff fuelled the fears for her future. Her belief that previous 'clashes' with management might have prompted the decision to relocate her implies that the previous instances were not resolved. Also, she believed that some residual animosity was affecting her future career progression and opportunity.

These experiences certainly threatened Cleo's sense of *achievement* in her work. Things proved different, however, as her new professional community was one of welcome, reassurance and support.

I actually had someone from the junior campus, and who had been at the senior school as a teacher, come up and she had told me how happy they were that I was going down there. And that it was like a big family there and I would have an absolutely wonderful time. And knowing I had some negative experiences at the senior school, she said 'It will be the changing of you.' Amongst the staff there, there was no competition whatsoever between them. They were completely open and supportive. It was like a large family, and it made me go back to exactly why I had chosen to be a teacher in the first place. It turned me completely around. She was right.

Despite this positive outcome, Cleo is unable to forget the negative emotions that were associated with the decision that she should relocate. These stories are part of a series of five or six significant periods in Cleo's career progression that connect like stepping stones to her mistrust of management's motives. The interactions were always perceived

as personal conflicts, rather than professional issues. Despite these experiences, Cleo did not seek employment elsewhere and I believe this is due to the strong *affiliation* and moral support that she gained from her core community. Isolating her conflicts to one or two individuals allowed her to remain secure within the school environment. Her words, ‘all of the people who were involved had their own issues to deal with’, indicate the dissociation of their actions from her performance in her duties.

Some of the Thomas’s performance management experiences are discussed in earlier sections. His alternative methodologies led to conflict with management, removal of classes and restrictions on his teaching responsibilities. It is the process and communication of these events that will be focused on in this section. Thomas was uncertain of when or how the whole thing began.

Unfortunately, you never heard about it. You just sort of heard the grumbings.
There was no direct criticism at that stage.

(Thomas, Teacher Present Interview, 26th October 2003)

Thomas was aware of a shift in management’s opinion of his effectiveness as a teacher and eventually this became evident in his relationship with one particular person in management.

He had me in the office asking me about a few kids in my class who were not happy with what’s going on. I suppose the rest of the term went that way. Any chance he had, he picked. And suddenly I had gone from getting great marks and very successful to, you know, suddenly I was going there to be ravaged at every opportunity.

Like Cleo, Thomas experienced the feeling of being observed and being ‘called into the office’, in this case based on the weak evaluative standpoint of a small number of students. This process of performance management leaves a feeling of mistrust, personal persecution and bewilderment. His immediate reaction was one of withdrawal. His honest reflection on this period indicates he felt there was criticism and dissatisfaction from the College management with regard to his teaching effectiveness.

I considered it to be unjust. I had to say, I was sort of thinking what's going wrong all of a sudden. I always tend to become introverted and at that stage I never actually sat down and thought about it but I did later on. I worked out that obviously I must have had some problems but a) they weren't expressed and b) they were not all my problems. The concerns weren't voiced clearly and what bugged me more was they weren't followed up. You see my pass rate was successful that year if you looked at the results ... At that stage I wasn't thinking that anyone had anything against me. I just thought, OK he is just concerned about the kids but at the end after another six months of this, I decided I needed to think about what was going on because I hadn't suddenly changed my ability to teach, so there was something else happening to me which I didn't know about.

Much of the frustration and feelings of powerlessness were caused by the perception that there was dissatisfaction in his performance without this being officially identified. Yet there were consequential staffing decisions which left Thomas feeling demoted and sanctioned.

I'm not saying that all of the blame was one way but the worst part of it was I was never getting any answers. 'No there's nothing else. We can just say this is a problem in isolation' but then other things started happening like, he wasn't letting me have Year 11 classes in that second semester. I just couldn't get anything from it. It was incredibly frustrating and I was thinking, 'What can I do? Where am I going to go now?' That was the stage I was at. I can't fix what I don't know and almost being told there is nothing to fix. There was just this matter in isolation and then to have some sort of judgement passed the way it was. At that stage I suppose I regarded Year 11 and 12 classes as being important which I no longer do but I suppose for my own personal worth ... it was an incredible let down after being a senior teacher.

Associated with this disappointment was the knowledge that others would be aware of the actions and possibly these people may know more than Thomas himself about the management's judgements. Thomas's account reveals that he knows very little of the formal documentation or record of these decisions which refined his role and identity in the school setting.

Suddenly finding without knowing why I had been demoted and the fear of other people allowing that to happen. He obviously had spoken to them. I wasn't really told. Nothing in writing was given even though he took a class off me and nothing to say what you needed to improve on, or 'this is the reason for it'. I don't know if it's on my record. I was pretty shell-shocked and obviously I didn't take it very well. I needed to be more forceful.

I felt some guilt and inadequacy at this point. I thought that Thomas may be referring to me when he spoke of other people knowing or allowing it to happen. About twelve years ago, one term after my appointment as Head of Department, I was called in during the holiday break to be informed that I would be taking over Thomas's class when the new term began. I had not been part of the discussion leading up to the decision and was only told that it was in response to concerns about student learning. I did not question the decision and when Thomas handed over the class details to me, he told me much the same story as he had in the interview. I offered sympathy but took no action.

Thomas's story certainly highlighted the stress and discomfort caused by the handling of some performance management issues by the management at that time. Thomas attributes this to the behaviours of one person and recalls the disempowerment he experienced.

It was just the fact that you didn't know where you really were. You couldn't deal with it and if there was a hassle, you didn't even know what the hassle was. You saw consequences of that without being able to even to discuss it or know what's going on. I do regret that I did not challenge the person in management. I don't think it would have made a lot of difference but it would have saved a lot of angst, in that I could recognize that a lot of the problems were his not mine.

Like Cleo, Thomas may consider these experiences as a threat to his basic need for safety (Maslow, 1970) and in rationalising the threat, he has localised the incident to an individual and their relationship with each other. He certainly believes that there would be more protection for him if a situation of that nature occurred again.

I get the feeling that if anything did happen now it would be a far better system

set-up, for example, I would think the Head of Department would be delegated to deal with anything rather than trying to jump in over their head, and be dealt with by someone who never knew me. I think if a Harassment Officer had been in position at that time I would have probably gone to her and claimed harassment almost. I'm not perfect, but I would have liked to at least to know what I've supposed to have done wrong and be able to explain to someone. It's very out of touch with the ethos of the school and what he's done.

I felt relieved when Thomas made the comment about such issues currently being better dealt with by the Head of Department. I still hold that position. Although I did not act to support Thomas twelve years ago, I know that nowadays, as a more experienced leader, I would be well informed and very proactive in the support of any teacher facing such a situation. I think that from Thomas's comments that he feels the same.

This suggests that it is desirable for immediate line managers to have ongoing discussions with teachers regarding their performance. If necessary a teacher who feels powerless in such a situation, could have an official advocate to ensure their voice is heard. Because the College is founded on a strong ethos of community, social justice, respect and support for individuals, teachers expect that same belief to underpin their treatment as employees and members of the community.

Thomas does, in fact, support the process of reviewing teacher performance. While reflecting on what could be considered as a lack of accountability for teachers, he contemplates the value of scheduled opportunities for more reflective practices for teachers.

The thing in this school is that there's no follow-up on what the teacher does in the class, partly because of the time-factor. At least a couple days at the end of the term should just be the teachers writing down, reviewing what they've done, recording how things have gone, personal journals.

As a result of this experience, Thomas has consciously tried to de-privatise his professional practice and identifies other benefits of having honest, balanced professional discussions.

I don't think I can communicate those things that I've done well. I made an effort this year to talk to my Head of Department about things that have gone well in my classes. I worked out that unless you communicate your strengths, all that everyone ever hears about, are the times when things haven't worked out. And it goes back, to a very one sided approach of listening to complaints, rather than actually discussing the issues.

McGregor (1985) states that appraisal can be motivational if subordinates evaluate their own performance relative to specific targets that they set at an earlier date and get effective feedback immediately after the behaviour (p. 87). Prompted by his negative experiences of performance management, Thomas has chosen to create opportunities for professional communication with his manager, inviting feedback and interchange of perspectives. He hopes that by having opened the discourse about his practice, future complaints or concerns will be dealt with as professional issues to be resolved with a different outcome.

9.4 Summary

Job offers, offers of promotions or offers of positions or roles of responsibility all serve to motivate these teachers. Currently, these experiences are one of the very few ways, recognised by the teachers, to enhance their own sense of *achievement*. Logically then, teachers feel a strong sense of rejection and failure when they are unsuccessful in gaining such positions and this often stalls or redirects their career progression. While teachers themselves value the opportunities to teach different disciplines or levels, in different locations, systems and contexts, the teachers do not perceive these experiences are recognised by employers or the system.

The direction of their career paths and the level of their engagement with their job are intertwined with their personal lives and these teachers are constantly striving to maintain balance between the two. For Cleo, industrial changes such as approving Parenting Leave and voluntary extra-curricular involvement have gone some way to acknowledge this nexus, but issues of child care, part-time work and study opportunities are still a concern for these teachers.

While middle management positions are valued experiences for classroom teachers, there are some concerns about the structure of these roles, particularly the unreasonable expectations that affect their performance in the classroom and their own well-being. These late-career teachers see their futures as open-ended but are unified in their goals to improve themselves at the ‘grass roots’ level of teaching.

The words of these experienced teachers, as shown in earlier quotes, reveal their own commitment to seeking challenge and change so that they remain stimulated with a sense of *achievement*. This seems to be a personal quest that they have undertaken which may have been supported by significant colleagues or incidental mentors they encountered on their journey. There is no evidence that the system assumed any responsibility in this area of the teachers’ development, supporting the findings of Wilson and others (2006), that ‘the onus remains on teachers themselves to plan their careers, to take stock of their own development needs and take action to meet them’ (p. 251).

The interesting thing about teaching is, that most areas, especially professional areas have some form of human resource department, we don’t.

(Simon, Teacher Future Interview, 29th February 2004)

There appears to be an absence of any evidence of a structured process that supports and recognises the career development in the stories of the teachers. Nevertheless, teachers have developed their own system of performance indicators which seem to be dependent on the values of individual teacher and the characteristics of their workplace or immediate colleagues.

The teachers’ accounts of their experiences of performance management are highly emotive and suggest that the issues remain seemingly unresolved. While the stories offer only one perspective of the events, the reality is that teachers gained little from the process and bear significant scars that had, and continue to have, negative consequences for their career evolution.

In all cases, the teachers associated the conflict with one or more individuals,

personalising the problem. The teachers were not aware of or did not validate the criteria and process by which their performance was being assessed. They did not make clear connections between the effectiveness of their teaching and the interventions by management. The teachers felt completely isolated, being held singly responsible for events or outcomes that had been adjudged as undesirable by management, with mostly sympathetic and moral support from colleagues. This personal level of accountability goes some way to explain why the teachers protect their independence and autonomy in the classroom.

As well as the stories of the experienced teachers told in the interviews, the personal reflections on the research experience by the participants also offer insights into the experiences that stimulate and motivate experienced teachers in their schools.

Chapter Ten: Participants' Reflection on Research Experience

10.1 My Reflection

10.1.1 My Epiphany

I am a secondary school Mathematics teacher of 28 years' experience and although I am a Head of Department, my passion has always been classroom teaching. At the end of 2000, I had a defining experience which reaffirmed me in my vocation, realigned my professional identity and also set me back on the path of postgraduate study that I promised I would never tread again.

During a blur of Term Four at school, in the midst of setting and marking exams, reports, staffing, course recommendations and plans for the following year, I received a call from a friend and colleague, whom I will refer to as Jenny. She was leaving her job at the State Assessment Board as the Mathematics Curriculum Officer and she rang to ask me to apply. The job had been advertised sometime before and I had dismissed the position as one I was not interested in. The position had not been filled but they were re-advertising and Jenny endeavoured to convince me that the job was ideal for me and me for it. I said I would consider it. Whether it was because of Jenny's flattering insistence or due to a thoroughly exhausting and frustrating school day, I sat down that night and composed my application.

The next week, I interrupted a hectic school schedule to attend my interview for the position. It proved to be one of the most professionally stimulating and uplifting interchanges of my career, spending an hour and half in dialogue about the goals of schooling and teaching pedagogies with two committed educators. For the first time, I genuinely considered taking the job, but an extended evening marking Year 12 exams eradicated it from my thoughts.

The call came the first day of the Christmas break offering me the job as Curriculum Officer for South Australia, Northern Territory and Malaysia. The job involved travel, support for my study, flexible hours and comparable pay. I found myself unable to

accept or reject the position and so began a most personally agonising 24 hours. A very decisive person, I was unnerved to find myself in dialogue with all the influential people in my life, my husband, children, parents, brothers, my principal, a colleague and mentor. Often coming to the point of tears, I scared them as much as myself with my uncustomary indecision and unanticipated emotion. It was just a job offer.

Was I scared of leaving the only work place I knew, a school? Did I not believe in my ability to do the job? A defining moment came when my colleague and mentor asked me the question, 'What is the most important thing to you?' Without hesitation I replied, 'The students!' and it became clear that I had never wanted to leave the classroom. I declined the job offer.

In the weeks that followed my uncharacteristic little episode, I had the chance to reflect on what had brought me to that point. My teaching year had been a stressful one. I had disagreed philosophically with some educational directions in which the school was heading and had experienced professional conflict with my immediate superior. This also affected our personal relationship. The changes had meant a great deal of uncertainty and work intensification for me and my faculty. The added frustration was the lack of influence I had over the final decisions. I realise that writing the application was a subconscious attempt to escape the highly compromised position I found myself in. I was shocked to think that I had begun to feel paralysed in my work and was looking for an exit. Several of my close colleagues had made the decision to leave teaching recently and I had been surprised and disappointed in their decision at the time but now found myself unexpectedly poised to tread the same path. On reflection I realised that I had considered the position of Curriculum Officer was one of more status than my current middle management role, and in declining it I had felt a little critical of myself for lacking ambition.

This seemingly mundane experience was an epiphany for me. After considerable reflection and self-analysis, I was reconfirmed in my teaching vocation and its importance. I released myself from any guilt over lack of ambition. Nevertheless, I realised that if I was going to continue in my chosen work I had to redefine my way of working so that it did not come at such a personal cost to me. I used the extended

summer break to plan how this new perspective could be achieved without compromising my professional integrity and effectiveness.

The first action I took was to make a late enrolment into the Doctoral program at Deakin University. Having been so stimulated by the conversation I had enjoyed during my interview, I wanted to reacquaint myself with academic discourse, refresh my professional knowledge and regain my professional status. Having said that, it was not just the qualification I was seeking but my own reconfirmation that my career was indeed a noble profession which is something you can overlook as you marshal several hundred boys on to the afternoon buses or organise the litter pickup at recess time.

The second was a promise that I would not invest so much of my self-worth and wellbeing into educational decisions made in the school. Not to say that I would contribute less of my opinions to the decision making process but once I had put them forward, I would accept the final outcomes and make the best of the way forward. This has not meant that there has been less professional disagreement but I have preserved my personal relationships and have kept more engaged with school management. I feel that my study has also provided me with more balance in my outlook, focusing myself less exclusively on my school context and looking more at the bigger picture, being less deterministic about the absolutes of good practice and school organization. I am certainly more reflective.

10.1.2 My Research Experience

Although I did not decide immediately, it seemed inevitable that my research would involve experienced teachers in their school context. Despite researching a very familiar field, I had no idea how much I had to learn. Being from a Maths-Science background, I was more familiar with quantitative methods, yet I chose a sociological lens and qualitative research methods. This has challenged my frame of reference to the world and, like all new knowledge, has changed me irreversibly.

As one of our writing tasks we were asked to experiment with different genres. Writing under pressure, like all part-time students, I quickly penned a parable. While it is no

great literary triumph, I was interested when I reread it recently.

A Parable for the Teacher

She was a gem cutter. Rehcaet worked with the most precious commodity in the kingdom. She took the stone which had a natural beauty of its own and created a piece which brought wealth to her country and joy to many. She was good at what she did. She cut each rock as if it were her first, assessing its individual cleavage and choosing its setting carefully to enhance its individual brilliance.

Rehcaet worked with other skilled crafters and often she would glance about her to watch them at their work. Old Chong had been creating jewellery for decades, he was precise and methodical, creating timeless pieces of high quality yet Boss was not happy with his work.

'Why do you use the old methods? You take twice as long as everyone else and your styles are old-fashioned. I want you to learn to use this new equipment and create some of the contemporary pieces from this range'.

Old Chong would remain silent and when Boss had gone would pick up his well-worn tools and continue to produce the pieces that were respected and appreciated by his customers and peers.

Inni was working feverishly in the euphoria of creativity. His tools were neglected, poorly maintained and abandoned where they fell. His pieces were wildly original but not all were sold quickly. Often stones and other resources were wasted in his production. Boss was critical of Inni's lack of care and wastefulness.

'You create one decent piece a year and the rest is just crazy junk that no-one wants to buy. Look at your tools and your work area. You keep no records. Our business can not prosper this way.'

Dependa worked quietly and efficiently. She had never created a piece of note but all her stones were well cut and her jewellery sold consistently. Rehcaet knew that she kept a folder of her designs of simple, elegant pieces that she never dared to show, let alone create. At least Boss did not berate her as he seemed unaware of her existence.

During their meal break, the workmates were talking but not communicating. They were together in this endeavour, all passionate and committed in their own way and yet there was a code of silence. They never talked of how or why they cut the stones, techniques of their craft or

where their designs came from. They talked brightly of work that went well and often sourly of the way their craft was not valued.

Rehcaet stood up, breaking herself away from the circle of her colleagues. She wanted more. She wanted her craft to be heralded, celebrated. She wanted her craft to be a living, evolving experience to be shared. She went to the Boss. She asked for the time and the opportunity to learn more about her profession. She did not anticipate that he would be so willing and encouraging of her quest. Somehow this is not what she expected of the taskmaster that had previously seemed so driven by the economy of their endeavour.

Rehcaet began to read and talk to people beyond their workshop with knowledge in their industry. She learned about the scientific nature of the stones, their formation, the chemical constitution of the gems, how the equipment worked and why it was designed that way. She visited the mines, other workshops and the jewellery stores where she talked with their customers.

At the start she did not share what she had learned with her colleagues as they had been wary of her decision to go out and learn. How did she find the time? They questioned her about what she was going to gain. As a skilled practitioner what could these people tell her about her craft that she did not already know? However, eventually they became curious and they began to see the changes that Rehcaet was bringing to the workshop. She was interested in their work and talked with them, valuing their opinions ideas and skills. The Boss who had seemed so focussed on productivity, now grew more interested in supporting their new found collegiality and willingly gave them the opportunities to make changes and have some say in decisions.

One day Rehcaet came upon Old Chong and Inni, working on one of the more difficult pieces from Dependa's designs and she smiled, and the Boss smiled and Dependa smiled and so did the customer that displayed the glory and perfection of the stone that was as beautiful as it could be.

As always, my idealism about my vocation and its wonder and importance is evident. The seemingly stereotypical characters are in fact based on actual past or present colleagues whom I had known to be unconventional but inspiring, if not always recognised as the effective teachers they were. There is also evidence that I perceived that undertaking post-graduate study changed my identity in my workplace. It acknowledges that my principal and the regional office were supportive and encouraging and my colleagues; curious and slightly disbelieving. The ever optimistic, happy ending

is recognition that I believe my involvement with the program has brought benefits to my school in addition to my own rewards.

10.1.3 Unexpected Reward

Always outspoken and talkative, I was mindful that I would need to be careful not to dominate the sessions I had with my participants. Several were sceptical that they would have much of interest to share. By far the most surprising and inspiring experience of my study was the interviews when I heard the stories of my four colleagues. As they spoke, these people I work with every day, told intriguing tales of experience, challenge and achievement that eventually brought them to our shared work context. Certainly it challenged my assessments of them as people and teachers. I also gained respect for their honest, insightful reflection of their own lives and was humbled by their trust in sharing often personal and sensitive information.

McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) describe the ‘privacy norm’ that exists between experienced teachers such that they will talk about anything but their practice, but my revelation from the interview experience goes further than that. The greatest revelation for me was to hear repeatedly and unashamedly about their commitment to the students and their welfare, as well as the participants’ passion for teaching and their strong sense of vocation. It seems strange even as I write this that I should have been surprised by their declarations. I know the participants to be respected, committed teachers and that the vocation of teaching is an overt and central component of Horizon Education and our school in particular. Yet to hear each teacher speak so openly in a private interview situation, accentuated for me that their statements were not rhetoric that conformed to the College ethos, but sprang from their deeply held personal beliefs. My research afforded me a privilege, not offered in a busy school context, to hear from not one but four of my colleagues in a very personal and honest interchange. That they shared the same powerful calling to their work was both compelling and encouraging.

10.2 Simon’s Reflection

At the conclusion of Simon’s first interview where we shared his story of Teacher Past, I

was about to switch off the tape recorder when he spoke spontaneously about our experience:

Simon: 'Oh, I find it quite, quite good actually. I just think to be able to go back and reflect and to think about my pathway and to even analyse some of the things that have happened over time. I find that very, very rewarding. I think it also gives me the opportunity to look back over it and then assess in my own mind (a) whether it has been worthwhile, (b) how much it has helped me to develop as a person. The great thing about this, I came up with positive conclusions. I have just found that it has been a great journey. I've really, really enjoyed it and still do. So it's good.'

Pauline: 'And you've never done that?'

Simon: 'Not in its entirety, I will sometimes think about certain events but this has helped bring them all together which I think is great.'

Simon's enthusiasm and wonder was palatable. This shared collegiate experience was very significant for him and we both felt we had been part of something special; he in the telling and me in the listening.

At the end of the entire process, with that initial interview two years behind him, he prepared this written response to his research experience:

The meetings and the reflective discussions in relation to past, present and future aspects of my teaching career were challenging and informative. It was interesting to delve back into the early stages of my teaching career, analysing key events and speculating on how each may have played a part in the development of my teaching style and leadership progress.

Key teachers and past mentors, I now realize have had a major influence on my development as a teacher and have shaped aspects of my teaching in ways which I would not have been aware of had it not been a structured, reflective process which formed the basis of our interviews.

One key aspect which has been a constant theme in our discussions is my personal desire for a balanced life and it is through this interview process that I have come

to the realisation that this has been a pervading principle in many of my past and present career choices within the teaching profession.

I have also come to the conclusion that teachers often make decisions from a set of values instilled in them from a wide range of developmental experiences over many years. These values are at times underrated in their influence over career decisions or even masked by other excuses for the lack of interest in the pursuit of leadership roles in education. Is a competent teacher necessarily the right person to undertake a leadership role within a school or should the position go to someone whose aspirations make them a better candidate for the position? Is there another way to reward competent teachers?

All in all, it was a very worthwhile exercise and I thank you, Pauline, for providing me with the opportunity to reflect on the past in order to better understand my journey to present.

From the outset, Simon's stories were well structured and fluent without giving the impression they were rehearsed. His theme of life balance was consistent and well-articulated, possibly resulting from previous reflective processes associated with his experiences in positions of responsibility.

The reflections of the other three participants were recorded some twelve months after the conclusion of the interviews yet their memories of the experience and how it affected them were still strongly articulated.

10.3 Richard's Reflection

Richard found it difficult to find the time to prepare a written reflection. So, it was longer than a year after the conclusion of his participation in the research that we meet and discussed his reflections on the experience. I took notes during the conversation and prepared the following statement written in his voice. Richard read and made small amendments to the statement and finally approved it as an accurate reflection of his research experience.

The first experience of the personality assessment was not surprising. It pointed

out my strengths and weaknesses and reinforced what I knew about myself. I tend to be a reflective person.

Recalling my professional history was not difficult for me to do as I had a clear record of where I had started and when I changed schools. It was useful however to think about my career as a timeline, the twists and turns and how it all fitted together. In reflection it all made sense. On a personal level I realised I was always challenging myself. Looking at my career path as a whole was something I had not done before and it was worthwhile to see that a path had emerged. While it was affirming, the process brought back some issues I had pushed to the back in wanting to move forward but being made to think about them was not unpleasant.

My discussions with Pauline about my present context, allowed us to get to know each other better as colleagues, speaking more deeply about issues ultimately made us more comfortable on a professional level. I feel Pauline has a better understanding of where I have come from. I certainly felt valued as she listened and processed my stories and gave me positive feedback.

My vision of my future career direction changes frequently, depending on how I feel about my work and the job. Basic ambition and family expectations are balanced with the rationalization of the extra commitment and time and energy required in a middle management position. During the time I was involved in the study, I applied for a position of responsibility and was successful. I think the experience of reflecting on my career made me more conscious of the skills and personal qualities I could bring to a position and was one factor contributing to my decision to apply.

My story had some dramatic moments with the peaks and troughs of personal battles and disappointments but it was affirming to recall my successes and the positions I had won in competitive situations. While this experience has not changed the way I view myself, it has challenged me to reflect more critically on my professional life.

10.4 Cleo's Reflection

Twelve months after Cleo's involvement, I asked her to prepare a written reflection of

her research experience. After a brief discussion to clarify that the response was to be a personal reflection on how she experienced the research process, she agreed to attend to the task in the forthcoming holidays when she emailed me the following statement.

My first experience was the personality analysis and I didn't quite know what to expect or what the results might show but the results supported, for the main, what I thought, also giving some insights. I guess we never really sit down to think about ourselves and the path our lives have taken so in this way it was a very valuable experience.

It was, however, the interview that focussed on my professional history that was probably the biggest shock as when we are actively 'living' there is little time for reflection, certainly not all the way back to the beginning and slowly through the years. Having been 'forced' (in a good way) to re-visit the last twenty or so years brought up some interesting memories and also some very strong emotions. There were some fabulous memories which I loved re-telling but also some terrible times which I had obviously buried even deeper than I had thought. Hindsight is a wonderful thing and one hundred per cent accurate....I am stronger than I ever would have thought if simply asked to rate myself....it is only when I think back to some of my experiences that I wonder how I survived at all. Reading about it made me realise that if someone else had been telling me about themselves, relating those stories (and lived to tell the tale), I would have thought they had super human powers.

The present, on the other hand, was probably the easiest to talk about as it is a daily thing and a lot of it is out of our control anyway. This was not the emotional battle field that the Past section was....maybe just a day to day thing that keeps itself rolling along through momentum. My future reflection was one which re-clarified where I thought I was going to be in the coming years. I guess this was not too surprising as I had already thought a bit about this experience created no emotionally charged moments.

I found the printed summaries of our interviews fantastic! When else would I have all of that put down to read through at leisure? I enjoyed reading them, mostly the Past but then I found that I would re-read them again later...it was re-affirming and a positive experience.

The whole experience ended up being a very thought provoking one which I would not have gone near if it had not been presented in the way in which it was; non-threatening, relaxed etc. Having gone through it, I can look back and see that it actually had an impact on my teaching...some of the 'grey areas' I had been avoiding, were clarified and it made me act on these. I have more of a sense of where I am going, even though I thought I already knew it, my students (hopefully) have benefited from it and I am a little 'wiser' for it all. If asked to comment to anyone else, or recommend it, I would do so unreservedly. THANKYOU Pauline for choosing me! (when I write my auto-biography in years to come, I will put you first in the acknowledgements)

10.5 Thomas's Reflection

Six months after my last interview with Thomas, I asked him to prepare a personal reflection on his research experience which he prepared within the week. His comfort with this task suggested that he had already reflected on the personal outcomes from his participation and was keen to share his interpretations with me.

The personality analysis was something that I had done before and the results were as expected. Nevertheless, it was useful in that it made me understand the way I am and explains how I deal with things. The rest of the process I found rather enthralling. In reflection I began to realise that I did a lot of things and did them well over the course of my career, albeit in a different time and a different place. It was affirming. It was good to see that a lot of what I did in the past was to be so formative and beneficial to my present and future as a teacher. You need that affirmation occasionally as a teacher because we are so situated in the present that we lose our peripheral vision.

The reflection did remind me of a very negative critical period in my career. Although I retold it in detail, the incident began to fade into insignificance in the bigger scheme of my entire teaching career. It helped me put it into perspective. The negative experience crushed me at the time and even while I was rebuilding my professional esteem I always wondered if perhaps I was blaming someone else, too readily in denial of my own faults. By reviewing my professional history, I was able to see that I have in the past and still can do things very well. I guess it

was a little negative in the sense that I have not gained a lot professionally since leaving New Zealand but I have made the most of the opportunities I had.

Sharing this experience with Pauline has developed our relationship. I have got to know Pauline as a listener and a positive light in our school context. I think she also gained a better picture of me as a teacher.

This experience has made me more aware of where I have been on my career journey and what I was capable of doing. It has clarified my future goals to do my job well and support others as I continue through the latter part of my career. I realise that I still enjoy my role and my teaching and this research experience allowed me to appreciate that a little more and realise that one negative experience cannot take that away.

Reading Pauline's transcripts of our interviews, I initially concentrated on finding grammatical errors as I was in some ways embarrassed by the extended statements of my career achievements. I am not accustomed to 'beating the drum' about what I have done but perhaps in hindsight I should have done that a little more in my career. It may have helped me remake my identity which was pretty battered at one stage.

The whole experience of being involved in the research was good. I felt like after two or three depressing years I was back. I know I am not perfect but I have regained my professional confidence and the research experience helped that process considerably.

10.6 Conclusion

While each of the teachers had an individual experience as a participant of the research, the reflections highlight some common benefits they had gained from being involved. Goodson (2001) identifies life history as a strategy for personal professional development, outlining the benefits of creating opportunities for self-reflection and using these experiences to learn about schools and schooling through teachers' lived experience (p.73). Participation in this research was a positive professional experience for all these experienced teachers. They appreciated the opportunity to recount their professional journey, discovering a sense of coherence and continuity of purpose as a

result of their hindsight. Despite revisiting some negative career experiences, they were also able to recognise the highlights of past achievements. Their story telling served to confirm the moral purpose underpinning their vocation and their commitment to it. These were similar benefits that recipients of the Quality Teaching Awards experienced in the process of their accreditation as reported by Dinham and Scott (2002, p. 26). As colleagues we enriched our professional relationships through shared insights and the teachers felt valued by my attention to and interest in their life stories. All of us were made aware that there is little time for these experiences in our busy teaching lives where we are anchored very strongly in the urgency of the immediate present.

Chapter Eleven: Significance of Findings

11.1 Introduction

The findings of this study focusing on the work context of four experienced teachers in one school although unique in their particularities have some universal relevance to schools and educational policies. Studying these individual cases in some depth has provided a deep understanding of the complexities of personal situations and professional encounters in school communities. It identifies how political, social, historical and personal issues are intricately woven into the working lives of experienced teachers. As a case-study, the research explored in depth a work context for teachers which has a unique culture, characterised by historical educational foundations and a well-articulated ethos. Research in this school context highlights the influence of shared vision and a strong sense of community on the engagement of experienced teachers in their schools.

The stories of the four experienced teachers reflected the diversities of their personalities, career and personal histories and professional identities, yet the common themes of their experiences illustrate the political and social forces that shape teachers' work. This case-study reveals how the general social processes affecting teachers' work are embodied in the actual practices in a school. The identification of factors which engage and disengage experienced teachers with their schools, signals implications for the management of large numbers of late-career teachers in their workplaces. Improved management could foster longer rewarding careers for the ageing teaching force so that their expertise and experience is not lost through early retirement, while promoting the teachers' good health and wellbeing. This study indicates that schools could be made more effective by engaging and motivating these teachers as both present and future leaders and mentors in educational systems. It is necessary to use their workplace knowledge and expertise to assist the new generation of school teachers to become effective professionals.

In a past age the manufacturing industry tended to see its plant and technical machinery as physically depreciating in value over time, and

needing replacement as it became obsolescent. A knowledge-based industry, however, depends on human rather than mechanical capacity of the firm. Its members appreciate over time, becoming better and more valuable the longer they work in the enterprise. As a result, knowledge-based enterprises can only survive if they ensure that professional development and lifelong learning are part and parcel of working in them, and are accepted components of one's daily work.

(Beare, 2002, p. 1)

11.2 Restructuring Teachers' Work

The focus that teachers place on the conditions in their own school context promotes a denial, acceptance or naiveté regarding the political and social forces that shape their work. At best, teachers perceive that their influence and control are confined to their own school and, at worst, to their own classroom. The concept of a Professional Learning Community as a desirable work context for teachers draws on the principles of organisational learning in the business sector. It is significant, however, that the derivation of this concept for schools did not include Senge's (1993) all-important 'Fifth Discipline' of organisational learning, that of Systems Thinking. Adopting Systems Thinking in an educational context would promote a more global and political perspective of teachers' work. A greater alignment of effort and process throughout the local, sector, state, national and global levels of educational systems, could be achieved by Systems Thinking, facilitated by purposeful interaction.

The moral purpose of education has a strong tradition in schooling (Ayres, 2001, p. 6; Goodman, 1995, p. 74), yet, it should not be confined to the heroic actions of the dedicated teacher. The four teachers in this study have strong beliefs about the purpose of teaching and learning, centred on student welfare and on making a positive difference in their students' lives. The teachers are critical of any intention that is in conflict with these purposes, such as, the intention that schools should act in the national interest, focusing on economic and market goals. Saltrick (1998) made this passionate statement about the purpose of schooling.

Our children are not units of production, our teachers are not industrial cogs, our schools are not factories. The amplification, the expansion, the deepening of the human mind cannot be measured by the tonnage extracted or the miles paved or in the widgets produced per hour. Citizenship is not just about earning a wage, it's about the responsible engagement with our social institutions. School is not just about transmitting job skills, it's also about transmitting our humanity to the next generation.

(p.2)

There needs to be a more significant alignment between the micro and macro levels of education regarding the purpose of teaching and learning in schools, in order to create a system that is unified in both vision and intent.

The four late-career teachers all felt a strong association with their school community where the well-articulated ethos of student-centred education was strongly aligned with the teachers' own sense of vocation. While this did not ensure total harmony between the teacher and their work context, it did seem to encourage their continuing engagement with the school. Positive social interaction and moral support were also very significant aspects of the collegial relationships in this school context. This strong sense of community is more indicative of the characteristics of the school, rather than those of the individuals within, and reflects the College's shared vision and governing founding principles. These findings suggest that the policies regarding curriculum, student assessment and teacher learning are best aligned with the shared vision reflecting the moral purpose of education. There needs to be an increasing commitment and investment, both publicly and politically, towards common goals in education and schooling throughout the educational system.

Historically, the classroom has been the exclusive domain of the teacher, sometimes serving as an impenetrable barrier or possibly a haven. For the four experienced teachers, their first priority is their classroom teaching and they are generally resigned to the current structure in schools which entitles management and policy makers to dictate the direction of educational change. These teachers' influence lies in their interpretation

and practical implementation of any reform for improving their students' educational outcomes within the school and classroom.

The current organisational structure in schools maximises the time a teacher spends in the classroom which is financially very economical. However, this large classroom commitment of teacher time has not supported the fluent transmission of educational changes that policy makers desire. The resultant disjunction has been attributed to the teachers' resistance or inability to change. Reformers have months or even years of deliberation and debate to assimilate changes and design reforms. With this level of ownership and familiarity, the reformers expect that they need only explain the reforms in order to transform teachers' deeply held values. Marris (1986) claimed that teachers, as implementers, needed the experience of integrating and assimilating the new knowledge and any rational attempts to pre-empt conflict, argument and resistance would be ineffective (p. 157), which was clearly evident in this school's recent experience of educational change. Teachers needed the opportunity to create their own interpretations of the reforms within a reasonable time frame within their work day. Assertions that late-career teachers limit innovation (Dinham, 1996, p. 20) are not supported by the stories of the four participants of the study. It was evident, however, that they were critical of the process of change in their school, particularly if the change is imposed on them.

There are increasing controls being built into the educational system, such as prescriptive frameworks, rigid guidelines and national testing. These controls reduce the empowerment of teachers to 'pseudo-participation and quasi-democracy' (Smyth & Shacklock, 1998, p. 23), deprofessionalising teachers in a betrayal of trust. Imposing order and control on schools, particularly through conditional financial support is neither ethical nor effective. The answer is to invest in building the capabilities of individuals and groups, balancing accountability and support in a way that respects the professionalism of educators and the culture of schools.

Building the capabilities of teachers to enable them to make positive contributions to the innovations in education requires restructuring the entire educational system as a Professional Learning Community, not just at the local school level. The model of a

Professional Learning Community embraces features such as shared leadership, collaborative culture and empowering teachers with more control over their work. However, while teachers thrive initially in this environment; engaged and motivated, it is not sustainable. Maintaining the same time commitment to face to face teaching, while requiring collaborating teachers to be creators of new knowledge leads to the intensification of their work (Shacklock, 1998; Seashore Louis & Kruse, 1999).

The role of the teacher needs to be redefined as a participant in the creation of new knowledge, not just an implementer of politically motivated policies. This new role must be supported by structures and practices that build time into a teacher's workday for other responsibilities besides their very important classroom presence. Late-career teachers should be encouraged to assume roles as 'mentors, university adjuncts, school restructurers and teacher leaders' (Darling-Hammond, Cobb & Bullmaster, 1999, p. 150). Teachers must develop as life-long learners in order to be equipped for their changing roles. This development needs to be specifically addressed through purposeful career progression that is recognised and facilitated in a formal sense within the educational system, as discussed below.

Greater coherence between the levels of the educational system — schools, sectors, local and national administrators and policy makers — can only be achieved through better communication, with both understanding and respect for the role that each plays in schooling in our society. Richard's experience at an international conference highlighted the benefits of teachers having more direct communication with politicians, academics and policy makers. More face-to-face discussion is necessary for better coherence between policy and practice. The new role for experienced teachers and the structure of their working day needs to reflect this.

Teachers in schools have little access to other stakeholders in education, besides parents and students. The four teachers had little or no opportunity to engage in academic discourse or experiences in educational research. They did not mention any interaction with academics and of the educational consultants with whom they worked; some entered the school but none entered the classroom. Richard had a single and memorable opportunity to leave the school environment to meet and enter into dialogue with policy

makers and politicians, but while valuable, it was a very rare occurrence. The four teachers seem to be isolated from stakeholders working beyond the school system, with little evidence of reciprocal dialogue or communication. This situation confirms Senge's description of an educational system, in his conversation with O'Neil (1995), as a multi-levelled organisation which is very stratified and fragmented. He continues by saying that 'people at all levels see themselves as dis-empowered' and hence concludes that 'it really should come as very little surprise that it's almost incapable of innovation' (p. 21).

The four teachers involved in this study were motivated by collaboration with colleagues and were eager to work with others, particularly young teachers. They had opportunities to work with student teachers who come into schools for teaching practicum but their vast practical knowledge as experienced teachers had not been utilised in teacher training programs in universities. My own recent positive experiences in conducting teaching and professional development programs, suggests that there would be mutual benefits for presenter and participants in sharing and modeling effective teaching practices developed through reflective teaching experience. Team teaching or mentoring opportunities, both within and outside their own schools, could be offered to these experienced teachers as part of their work day. This would provide support for inexperienced teachers as well as motivation for the experienced mentors while facilitating the transmission of professional knowledge. With the imminent retirement of a large number of experienced practitioners, it is important to draw on their professional expertise before it is no longer accessible.

Although Hargreaves (1995b) and Senge, in his interview with O'Neil (1995), question the possibility of transforming schools into Professional Learning Communities, this research suggests there is a need for more systemic thinking at all levels of the educational system.

So there's absolutely no choice but trying to create change on multiple levels. Yes, there needs to be fundamental innovation in the classroom. Yes, you've got to find and support these teachers who are really committed to that. And no, it's completely inadequate by itself, because you have to be working simultaneously to create a totally different environment in the

classroom, in the school, in the school system, and eventually in the school community. And that's why it's not easy.

Senge (O'Neill, 1995, p.21)

The educational system and schools can redefine the role of the teacher by promoting policies and practices which allow for shared leadership and a genuine collaborative culture in schools while establishing and maintaining a socially just work context, not only for experienced, but all teachers. Although a new culture should begin to build for our beginning teachers, it is essential for all levels of the educational system to tap into the decades of work experiences of our late-career teachers before this knowledge, expertise and experience is lost to our profession.

11.3 School Management

Even with more communication between all levels of the educational system, school managers would still have the most immediate, frequent and personal influence on teachers' work context. The personnel of school management featured very strongly in the career progression of the four teachers in this study. They were clear about their expectations of management and often made their decisions to choose or leave a work context, based on the school leaders.

Kyriacou (2001) suggested that senior managers in schools needed 'to give more thought to the way in which they may be creating unnecessary sources of stress through poor management' (p.6). At all stages of their careers these four teachers were critical of arbitrary management of their schools, characterised by favouritism, discrimination and unpredictable policy decisions. This was often referred to as the 'politics' of the school by the teachers who considered such a working climate distasteful. Teachers expect procedural fairness in the adjudication of competing interests of sectors within the school. They are not seeking soft management, but must have trust in the benevolent intentions of managers. There is an expectation that, as part of a group, or as an individual, they will receive fair decisions on contested situations. While these teachers accepted the authority of managers afforded by their position, they still expected that

their opinions would be listened to. They wanted to be consulted and see some evidence that their perceptions had been taken into account when the final decision was made, thus providing them with a sense of *influence*.

These teachers respect principals and managers who are proud of their school communities and who direct all their energies to school improvement and not self-advancement. Principals who articulate a compelling vision for the school community and then act in such a way that enlivens that vision, generate a collective sense of engagement amongst teaching staff. These teachers expect school leaders to speak out against proposed innovations that are unlikely to yield improved outcomes for student learning or that require unrealistic expectations of teachers. Reeves (2006) suggests that educators are suffering from ‘initiative fatigue’ and has this suggestion for managers.

Leaders at every level might want to try this experiment. At the next gathering of educators, raise your right hand and pledge: “I will not ask you to implement one more initiative until we first take some things off the table.” Then listen. It might be the first round of applause you’ve had for a while.

(p. 3)

Supporting teachers’ professional aspirations with resourcing and training, as well as following and acknowledging their progress fostered teachers’ willingness to take risks with collective rather than individual accountability. This managerial style reduces teacher vulnerability and creates a context where teachers are encouraged to pursue a sense of *achievement*.

Lastly, school managers who act in an ethical manner, aligning their actions with the moral purpose of schooling and the ethos and vision of the school, can facilitate a strong professional association for teachers with their work context. But these teachers had an even stronger commitment to their workplace when their relationship with managers is built on strong interpersonal trust. The human need for *affiliation* is a strong motivator for teachers and expressions of personal regard for each other provide a valuable lifeline. Management personnel who, through their actions, showed consideration and concern

for the personal issues of people on staff were held in high regard by the teachers. Evans (2001) claims that ‘leaders and managers have as much responsibility towards the staff whom they lead and manage as they do towards the pupils and students within their institution’ and claims that their responsibility extends to ‘endeavouring to meet as many individual needs as possible’ (p. 303).

Managers who offered career advice and provided opportunities for career progression signaled their personal regard for teachers. This concern for the teachers as individuals was a strong contrast to the pursuit of school improvement irrespective of the welfare of individual community members. Showing interest in the welfare of individuals beyond the expectations of their administrative role generated a powerful social association for teachers prompting reciprocal actions of care, consideration and goodwill.

This study highlights the pivotal role played by management personnel in effective schools and outlines the high professional standards which determine a quality administrator. Quality managers articulate and activate a shared vision and a management style that features supportive shared leadership to create a Professional Learning Community in a school context. They need to establish practices and structures that enable and encourage teachers to engage in real collaboration and reflective practices. Management personnel need to have knowledge regarding the nature of a Professional Learning Community and the skills and strategies for building such a culture in a school context (Huffman & Hipp, 2003, p. 14). In addition, school managers require significant personnel management skills in order to sustain the community and the health, well-being and engagement of its teachers. The teachers in this study have identified the importance of effective school managers and the role, as identified, does not seem to be a natural progression from the role of classroom teacher. The findings suggest that there should be further research into effective and practical career development which specifically addresses this very demanding job description for those teachers who wish to pursue a career path in school management. Such research is necessary to facilitate the development of sufficient quality school managers for the future when there will be a younger, less experienced teaching force.

11.4 Management of Career Progression

From beginning to veteran teacher, the current career structures for these four classroom teachers had a very flat profile, particularly in the latter years of their employment. While these teachers assumed responsibility for setting their own professional goals, this was not always supported or recognised by their employer. Wilson and others (2006) concluded that career development is ‘an underdeveloped concept in many schools’ (p. 251). Career advice, encouragement and opportunity for career progression seemed to be dependent on the teacher’s personal ambition, the style and personality of leadership in their school, their personal and family situations and, fate. The absence of significant formalised career steps did not support the promotion of experienced teachers as lifelong learners, nor did it contribute to the teachers’ sense of *achievement*.

The equitable allocation of challenging tasks in a workplace motivates teachers and enhances their sense of *achievement*. Promotional positions and roles with special responsibility are clearly valued experiences for developing teachers but within our current school structures they detract from the quality and commitment to classroom teaching. Positions of responsibility need to be structured carefully, having tenured or short terms with appropriate time allocation to minimize the work intensification associated with the role. If teachers gained appropriate acknowledgement for this valuable professional experience, the position could provide a motivating career challenge to a classroom teacher, without compromising their strong sense of moral purpose and commitment to teaching.

If teachers are to involve themselves in the creation of new knowledge, they need skills in action research and the collection and interpretation of data, which can be gained through purposeful professional study. For the four participants of this research, postgraduate study was not considered as a desirable nor recognised career option for fulltime teachers. Certainly my colleagues consider me both driven and heroic for undertaking my doctoral studies. There is a need to support, promote and acknowledge teachers’ involvement in meaningful professional study. As discussed earlier, teachers need more time to access and participate in academic discourse, working with academics in schools and universities to expand the theoretical and working knowledge of

educators.

These four teachers received very little guidance throughout their careers and were only aware of the nature and extent of their career progression through the reflection they undertook as participants in this study. The teachers all acknowledged the positive outcomes they gained from recounting and reviewing their career histories. This suggests that a similar experience may be a beneficial professional experience for late-career teachers in clarifying career perceptions and affirming their commitment to their vocation. Fullan (1991) in his advice to teachers to ‘reflect in, on and about action’ (p. 67) acknowledged the benefits of life histories.

If our teaching is grounded in our purposes, the kind of experiences we have had, and the kinds of people we have become, one way to retrieve the grounds of our teaching is to write personal biographies or life histories of our growth and development as teachers. Writing and studying these autobiographies or narratives of our experience can provide excellent opportunities for personal reflection, for examining our purposes, and for identifying how we can and want to change.

(p. 71)

Fullan describes this as a personal activity for the teacher but considering the benefits I gained from listening to, recording, retelling and discussing the life histories with the teachers, I think the experience is enriched if shared with a colleague. A proposal for further consideration is the possibility of student teachers or inexperienced teachers playing the role that I had as a researcher and gaining an insight into the rich life experiences of our late-career teachers. This may facilitate the transmission and hence preservation of their professional knowledge of, and beliefs about the teaching vocation. Furthermore, as part of the human resource management in schools, teachers need to regularly engage in discussion regarding their career progress and evolution. This should include career planning, setting and evaluating professional goals and the tracking of training and development schedules. This practice provides a self-regulated foundation for professional development and performance appraisal.

Cultures of educational systems and schools need to project the perception of a classroom teacher as a lifelong learner by providing structures, practices and personnel that build the capabilities of teachers with a commitment to knowledge building, reflective practice, professional development, career evolution and performance review.

11.5 Professional Review

Professional review is essential in the ongoing development of effective teachers and should not be restricted to cases involving the management of poor performance. The classroom teachers involved in this study recognised very little positive acknowledgement of their good performance from managers yet had long lasting memories of negative interchanges regarding dissatisfaction with some aspects of their teaching. These experiences affected personal relationships, created feelings of vulnerability and distrust, damaged their professional identity and held no promise for improved teaching and learning outcomes. These outcomes supported McGregor's statements that humans find it difficult to hear and accept criticism and a superior evaluating a teacher's performance against the superior's objectives and standards accentuates the subordinate's dependence, arousing hostility and anxiety (p. 85). Fullan (1991) stated that 'appreciating the teacher as a total person and not just a bundle of competencies and deficits is central to (teacher professional growth)' (p. 87). The answer is not a formal structure of appraisal designed on principles of accountability and correction but is closely related to the career evolution support discussed in the previous section.

A culture of professional review develops amongst reflective practitioners who work in learning teams where the members are aligned in purpose but may be diverse in action (Johnson, 2004). The following model for teacher appraisal is based on McGregor's (1985) discussion of performance appraisal with a 'motivational purpose' (p. 86). Feedback to teachers is provided by members of a learning team, an immediate manager, a staff mentor or critical friend. The feedback occurs in their day to day relationship and relates specifically to teaching and learning challenges. The central consideration is student learning, as opposed to teacher action. In a trust relationship the teachers evaluate their own performance relative to the professional targets that he or she had

identified at an earlier stage, and this is done in the presence of a reflective listener who supports inquiry and evaluation but is not critical or judgmental.

An additional component to the affirmation and acknowledgement of the teacher's efforts and achievements is external validation. Some possibilities for publicising teacher learning throughout the school community are to have external facilitators or critical friends reporting to staff, teachers receiving praise and support from senior management or gaining internal and external recognition for developments or encouraging teachers to present papers at conferences and write journal articles. Particular teaching challenges for some practitioners may require extra support through mentoring which provides opportunities to observe other teachers or, alternatively, the provision of training from other sources that the teacher values and respects.

11.6 Conclusion

The model of a Professional Learning Community is a working context that would enable classroom teachers to pursue their need for *achievement, influence* and *association*. With public and political commitment and investment, the educational system must develop policies and practices which build and maintain such a culture at the macro and micro levels of the system. The role of the classroom teacher must be redefined to allow practitioners to interact with all stakeholders in the system as part of their work commitment, while still preserving their presence in the classroom as their major contribution. The educational system and schools need to promote a teaching role as one of a lifelong learning, building different valued professional experiences and acknowledgements into the career evolution of all teachers. There need to be structures and practices which provide teachers with career guidance and ongoing professional review opportunities. Educational systems need to regain the moral imperative of schooling as a shared vision and ensure that corollary actions at all levels of the system serve to enliven this vision.

The four teachers in this study received little review or recognition of their career progression or teaching effectiveness. The educational system needs more constructive forms of accountability and standards that are recognised and respected by teachers —

possibly regulated by the profession itself. This, combined with enhancing the capabilities of teachers, will promote a stronger, more cohesive educational system where teachers can feel a sense of *association, influence* and *achievement* and ultimately *self-fulfilment*.

The final words come from Senge in his interview with O'Neil (1995).

The education field has a huge asset. A large proportion of people enter this profession with a high sense of personal purpose. It is converted into a liability, because within a few years they become extraordinarily cynical....Nonetheless, this sense of personal purpose is still a huge potential asset, because if you dig down deep enough, you'll find a sense of purpose and deep caring in the most hardened cynic. Education is standing in a goldmine in this respect.

(p. 22)

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