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**Leaving the Federation: Secondary Administrators'  
Responses to a Change in Context**

**by**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment for the  
degree of Master of Education**

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## **Abstract**

**The effects of contextual change (removal from the teachers' federation) on the culture of a small group of secondary school administrators was studied qualitatively, by a participant observer, using interviews, observations, and a survey. The participants included seven principals, (six males and one female) and eleven vice-principals, (seven males and four females). Changes in the group culture are noted in areas such as: sense of purpose, sense of community, trust, decision making, empowerment and recognition. The changes in culture impaired the group's ability to collaborate, and caused feelings of anger, frustration, isolation and an increased interest in retirement.**

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## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Introduction**

**In December 1997, the government of Ontario enacted legislation (Bill 160) which removed the province's principals and vice-principals from the teachers' federations effective January 1, 1998. Individual administrators had until April 1, 1998 to make the decision to maintain their status as administrators or to give up their administrative position and remain in the teachers' bargaining unit.**

**The Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (O.S.S.T.F.) had previously provided financial, professional, legal and emotional support for secondary school administrators. These administrators in turn had been strong and active participants in the teachers' federation's governance and committee activities, where they had often gained leadership skills. These skills had assisted many members in gaining promotions so that administrators valued and had felt valued by the O.S.S.T.F.**

**The removal of administrators from the bargaining unit resulted in an alteration in the administrators' work context and culture. Gronn and Ribbins (1996) understand contexts as "networks of hierarchically stratified, material institutional arrangements, peculiar to different forms of society (or social formations), which both provide opportunities for the expression, and constraint, of human agency" (p. 456). They believe that these institutional enterprises "pre- and post-date the lives of particular**

individuals who inhabit them” and are the outgrowth of “deep-seated, longitudinal patterns of historical and cultural causation” (p. 456). The abrupt transition in context (being removed from the teachers’ federation) after so many constructive years was an unwelcome and difficult change for most secondary school administrators. Context, to the extent that it counts at all, is “usually left implicit, conceptualized as an abstract ‘situation,’ or creeps in as mere background information about sampling and where the research was conducted” (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996, p. 455). For the group in this study, it was the change in context which caused the modification in culture.

Culture is the body of customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits constituting the distinct tradition of a social group: “Culture reflects the organization’s values and beliefs, rituals, philosophy, norms of interaction, and the expectations about the way things are done.... [It] defines what is and is not possible within the organization” (Kaplan and Evans, 1997, p. 1). This study investigates the changes in the culture of the study group which resulted from the change in organizational context.

### Problem Statement

Change causes intense feelings in those affected by it: “Under conditions of uncertainty, learning, anxiety, difficulties, and fear of the unknown are *intrinsic* to the change process, especially at the early stages. We know that early difficulties are guaranteed” ( Fullan, 1993, p. 24). Changes as fundamental as the ones being studied can be expected to

engender similar responses from this group. These responses will be the main topic of this study.

The question guiding this research was “What does it mean to secondary school administrators to be removed from the teachers’ federation”? The actual changes in context (what was changed), resultant changes in culture (how things changed), and the administrators’ responses to these changes will be investigated.

Changes in context include changes in the work environment or setting resulting from changes in the contractual status of administrators. These changes will be referred to as the actual changes and will include items of a legal or organizational nature such as duties that were added or deleted from the administrators’ role and changes to procedures or to the chain of command. Changes in culture are those which mean a change in underlying traditions, values and beliefs and in the way in which individuals interact. Adjustments in the culture of this group will be referred to as resultant changes. Administrators’ perceptions about what has not changed will also be described.

### **Rationale**

The administrative team in a secondary school is responsible for the development and maintenance of the school climate. Dietrich and Bailey (1996) define climate as a “comprehensive structure made up of the culture, physical plant, organizational structure, social relationships, and individual behaviour” (p. 16). The principal and vice-principal(s) act, at the

school level, as a team using the best combination of their individual strengths to complete the myriad of tasks and perform the multitude of roles that make up the leadership needs of the school. Secondary school administrators, along with their elementary school colleagues, also regularly assume a number of system responsibilities. The focus of all this activity is the best education for every student.

Fullen (1999) believes that the role of this team is salient in providing a positive school culture: “Nobody else can do it.... You need leadership and that is where the coalescing leadership role of the principal ... can really pay off” (p. 3). Because principals and vice-principals play this pivotal role in the education of children and young adults, it is important to examine any situation that might impact on their abilities to perform these functions.

### **Research Design**

The design of this study is qualitative. Patton (1990) explains that qualitative inquiry “contributes to basic research through ‘grounded theory’ [and is] essentially an inductive strategy for generating and confirming theory that emerges from close involvement and direct contact with the empirical world” ( p. 153). Since humans in context are the focus of this study, it seems reasonable that a research method should be used that “highlights the lived experience of situationally embedded real world actors” (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996, p. 455).

### **Qualitative Research**

The design of the study will emerge over the course of the data

collection. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) suggest that this process is difficult for traditional researchers to understand as they consider “the idea of a design evolving over time [as] contrary, and perhaps even blasphemous” (p. 44). However, they justify this process:

Any student or researcher can, however, appreciate the experience of carrying out one’s research study and discovering a feature for which one’s research design did not allow consideration. It is this very notion of pursuing important or salient early discoveries that undergirds qualitative approaches ... important leads are pursued by asking new questions. (p. 44)

In this study, I used Maykut and Morehouse’s concept of the “broadening or narrowing of what is important to study [which ] is anticipated and planned for, as best one can, in qualitative research designs” ( p. 44). This design was considered preferable to quantitative research of humans in context because “traditional research methodologies (e.g. questionnaires and interviews) ... pay insufficient attention to the role played by institutional context in the shaping of human agency” (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996, p. 452). This process is particularly appropriate for this study since some believe that only qualitative study “can illuminate the context of leadership” (Neumann, 1995, p. 253). Neumann describes this context as “an entity like a container bound in the particulars of time and space within which the organization members negotiate meaningful action” (p. 253).

The situation described in this study was new to everyone involved. No one knew what to expect and therefore, it would have been difficult to formulate exact questions that would adequately examine the change. One way would have been to examine the literature and speculate however, this approach might have “missed the mark”. In this case the “normative and instrumental approaches that continue to dominate mainstream leadership studies [could not adequately document the] particularities of real-world circumstances and their constitutive role in structuring social action” (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996, p. 452). In a study such as this, context must occupy a more important place than to “act at best as a mere stage prop or billboard (where the) agents either vanish or are reconstituted as variables” (p. 455). The advantage of qualitative research is that more “attention can be given to nuance, setting, inter dependencies, complexities, idiosyncrasies and context” (Patton, 1990, p. 51). This design allows the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire or interview questions.

### Analytic Induction

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) consider an “inductive approach to data analysis [as] one of the defining characteristics of qualitative research [in contrast to deductive data analysis which is] characteristic of the traditional scientific method” (p. 126).

In deductive reasoning, hypotheses are generated prior to the beginning of a study, the relevant data to be collected is defined and the resulting data is methodically analyzed to determine how much support can be given to the hypotheses.

In an inductive approach, “hypotheses are not developed a priori and thus the relevant variables for data collection are not pre-determined” (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p. 127) and are not grouped according to predetermined categories. Instead, what becomes important to analyze, emerges from the data itself out of a process of inductive reasoning or analytic induction. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) confirm that this type of qualitative analysis is particularly useful with participant observation (p. 70).

## CHAPTER TWO

### Methodology

In this section the subjects and data collection methods are identified and the researcher's role as a participant observer is clarified.

#### Sampling

The method of sampling in analytic induction is purposeful sampling. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) suggest that with purposeful sampling you “choose particular subjects to include because they are believed to facilitate the expansion of the developing theory” (p. 71). In this study, the purposeful sample will consist of the secondary school principals and vice-principals of a small public school board as well as members on the vice-principals' short list, that is, teachers who have been selected for leadership positions and are awaiting placement as vice-principals.

Patton (1990) notes that the “logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for study in depth” (p. 169). In this case, the intention of the purposeful sampling is to gain a deeper understanding of this case rather than to reach conclusions generalizable to a larger population. The themes developed using the subjects in the study may not appear in the same proportion as in the total population of principals and vice-principals in Ontario. Because this is a study of a change in context, the pre- and post-context cannot be expected to appear in any other similar group.



## Subjects

The subjects of this research are all members of the Secondary School Administrators' Group employed by a small public school board. This school board has six secondary schools including two smaller collegiates and four larger composite schools. The secondary school administrators' group consists of 18 members. Of these, 6 are principals; five males and one female. Five of these principals have more than ten years experience in this role, one has four years experience in this role. With the retirement window offered in January of 1998, all five of the experienced principals were eligible to retire however, only one had declared that he would do so. The rest of the group is made up of 9 active vice-principals, another vice-principal working in a coordinator's role out of the board office, and 2 who are on the short list. Of the active vice-principals, 4 are female. Of the 4 females, only one had more than five years experience in the role; one was a new appointee. Of the 5 males active vice-principals, 3 had more than 5 years experience in the role; none were new appointees. The Secondary School Administrators' Group being investigated in this study, was subsumed by a larger group which the senior administrators named The Management Group. The Management Group is made up of all 60 administrators, both secondary and elementary, in this public school board. It came into effect in August of 1998.

## Data Collection

The following data will be collected: field notes, both descriptive and

reflective, conversation notes from discussions with colleagues, agendas and the minutes from Secondary Administrators' meetings, agendas and the minutes of Management Group meetings, responses to a survey on cultural change.

1. Field notes are the "written account of what the researcher hears, sees, experiences, and thinks in the course of collecting and reflecting on the data in a qualitative study" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 107). These will be written on all formal Management meetings and other meetings as well as on informal conversations with members of the group as they relate to the study. The notes will take two forms - descriptive and reflective.

a. The descriptive notes will cover several aspects: portraits of the subjects including body language, mannerisms, style of talking and acting; reconstruction of the dialogue ; descriptions of physical settings incorporating sketches of furniture and seating arrangements, and a sense of the building and space; the observer's behaviour and activities.

b. The reflective notes are the researcher's reflections on the meetings and conversations. Bogdan and Bicklen (1992) concede that some researchers think that "the weakness of the qualitative approach is that it relies too heavily on the researcher as the instrument... others say that this is its strength" (p. 123). They also believe that a researcher can overcome the difficulty with subjectivity by acknowledging and controlling subjectivity through field note reflection (p. 124). The reflective field notes will chronicle what Bogdan and Bicklen describe as:

a more personal account of the journey ... the more subjective side [where the] emphasis is on speculation, feelings, problems, ideas, hunches, impressions and prejudices...you let it all hang out: Confess your mistakes, your inadequacies, your prejudices, your likes and dislikes.... the purpose of all this reflection is to improve the notes.  
(p. 121)

This type of field note contains reflection on any emerging patterns, methodological problems, ethical dilemmas or conflicts, the observer's frame of mind and points of clarification. These notes are a very important part of the study. Patton (1990) warns that "to be insensitive to shifts in one's own attitudes opens the way for naive interpretation of the complex set of events under analysis" (p. 475).

2. Conversation notes will be taken during or after discussions with colleagues. These will include exchanges that occur between and among subjects as well as what the subjects say to the researcher in private.

3. Agendas and minutes from the meetings of the Secondary Administrators' Group and from the Management Group will be collected and analyzed for important issues and themes. Patton (1990) writes: "The participant observer must be strategic about taking field notes, timing their writing and recording in such a way that they are able to get their work done without unduly affecting either their participation or their observation" (p. 243). Participant observers having this support material will reduce the reliance on written field notes for content of the discussions taking place

during the meetings. This written material will help to compensate for the difficulty in trying to accurately record everything in field notes.

4. The analysis of the changes in the culture of this group of secondary school administrators will be based on an inventory questionnaire (see Appendix) applying the work of Patterson, Purkey and Parker as outlined by Sergiovanni and Starratt(1998). Such a tool can be used to lead the study deep into the cultural life of the group, “into the tacit world of beliefs and norms, into the realm of meaning and significance” (p. 192). The survey which asked respondents to identify any changes since the Secondary Administrator’s Group had been removed from O.S.S.T.F., was sent to all members of the group.

#### Participant Observation

The data for this study will be collected by participant observation, “the most comprehensive of all research strategies” (Becker cited in Patton 1990, p. 25). Patton maintains that “to understand the complexities of many situations, direct participation in and observation of the phenomenon of interest may be the best research method” ( p. 25). The participant observation strategy used in this study meets the four “people oriented mandates in collecting qualitative data” outlined by John Lofland (cited in Patton, 1990, p. 32):

1. “Get close enough to the people and the situation being studied to personally understand in depth the details of what goes on.” I have been a member of the group under study for 6 years - 2.5 on the short list and 3.5

as a vice-principal. I have worked on a daily basis with 6 members and have taken university courses with 4 of the others.

2. "Aim at capturing what actually takes place and what people actually say (the perceived facts)." This will be done in field notes and notes on conversations.

3. "Include a great deal of pure description of people, activities, interactions, and settings." This will also be done in the field notes. Most of the Management Group meetings take place in the same setting; however, seating arrangements will differ.

4. "Include direct quotations from people." Participants must provide details on what is happening in their own words so it is important to record accurate quotes to avoid the observer imposing her own perspective of the situation. Since there may be a delay between the writing of the field notes and the analysis of data, it is important to transcribe actual conversations instead of the observer's remembrances of the content. Otherwise, the data may be biased.

Participant observation is the most appropriate research strategy to provide the observational depth, detail and insight into the administrators' responses to a change in context.

In addition to these mandates, Patton (1990) identifies four issues associated with having non-participant observers. These also need to be addressed by the participant observer.

1. Reactions of the subjects to the presence of the observer. The

concern is that an unknown observer will cause a 'halo effect' wherein the participants act in an exemplary fashion. Conversely, an observer that is unfamiliar to the group may cause them to become anxious and tense so that their participation is atypical. I am already a part of this group so my presence will not cause either of these problems.

2. Changes in the observer. Observers, when they are doing field work, can become involved with participants and may "lose their sensitivity to the full range of events occurring in the setting" (Patton, 1990, p. 475). Johnson and Glazer as cited in Patton consider this issue to be "central to the method of participant observation"(p. 475). Recording these changes as observer comments in field notes and in conversations with participants will address this potential obstacle.

3. Predispositions or biases of the observer. "Every researcher brings perceptions and interpretations to the problem being studied - regardless of methods used" (Patton, 1990, p. 476). By being aware of and recording my thoughts and feelings in observer comments in the field notes, I should be able to identify my biases. Since I am a participant observer, my thoughts and feelings are part of the data.

4. Competence of the Observer. A study can be seriously compromised by an incompetent observer. "Because the researcher is the instrument in qualitative inquiry, a qualitative report must include information on the researcher" (Patton, 1990, p. 472). Patton lists this mandatory information: "skills, training, insights and capabilities" (p. 372). As

previously mentioned, I have been a member of this group for a number of years. My training in conflict management has educated me to be aware of assumptions, both my own and those of others. My background as a science instructor has trained me to observe in a detached way. Often, in science, seemingly unimportant details become important in analyzing results. As well, my training and experience in Guidance and Counseling allow me to view communication both verbal and nonverbal in a dispassionate and analytical way. Patton (1990) writes:

There can be no definitive list of questions that must be addressed to establish investigator credibility. *The principle is to report any personal and professional information that may have affected data collection, analysis, and interpretation - either negatively or positively - in the minds of the users of the findings [italics in original].* (p. 472)

Meeting Lofland's four mandates and by addressing Patton's four issues relating to observing subjects, is important to assure the credibility of this study.

### Data Analysis

Data will be analyzed using thematic analysis according to the methods described by Bodgan and Biklen (1992) and Patton (1990). Van Manen (1994) writes that "in order to come to grips with the structure of meaning ... it is helpful to think of the phenomenon described ... in terms of meaning units ... Theme gives control and order to our research and writing" (p. 78 - 79).

Coding categories for themes will be developed using the suggestions offered by Bogdan and Biklen (1992). Coding categories are “certain words, phrases, patterns of behaviour, subjects’ ways of thinking, and events which repeatedly stand out” (p. 166). Guba (cited in Patton 1990) calls these ‘recurring regularities’ which can be grouped as similarities or differences” (p. 403). All of the information gathered will be read and essential statements or phrases will be highlighted. These will be colour coded according to theme or commonality. Through this analysis of the data, the coding categories, patterns or themes will emerge. Themes, as they emerge, will be compared to information in the literature to note similarities and differences.

### Consent / Confidentiality

The study will be explained at the first meeting of the secondary school administrators. It will be made clear that confidentiality will be preserved. The group will be asked if there are any objections to the taking of field notes during the meetings over the year or to the noting of comments during conversations. A written letter of consent will be signed by each participant involved in conversations.

The need for anonymity will affect some of the reporting procedures. In order to preserve confidentiality, participants will be assigned pseudonyms and several prototypical administrators will be created using the common themes. These representatives will serve as ‘voices’, so that actual statements will be attributed to a composite person rather than to an



individual.

### Limitations

The following constitute the limitations of the study:

1. The researcher will be the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. This may be viewed as a weakness as subjectivity becomes an issue. Patton (1990) says that “the human factor is the greatest strength and fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis” ( p. 372).

Since the investigator is a participant observer and, as already discussed in the research design section, selective perceptions may distort the data through the dual role of participant and observer, the data will inevitably represent perspectives rather than absolute truth.

2. The size and mode (purposeful) of sample selection means that findings cannot be generalized to a larger sample. Any conclusions will be limited to the group of secondary school administrators participating in the study.

3. The amount of data collected is constrained by the limited number of times the group and/or individuals are actually observed. For example, no direct observation of the weekly principals' meetings can be made by the researcher. As well, the secondary and elementary administrators' group, as a whole, meets only once each month.

4. Observations are limited primarily to overt behaviour in meetings. Data to be collected on subjects who are guarded in their responses, would

be more speculative.

5. In qualitative analysis, Patton(1990) believes that there are “no straightforward tests for reliability and validity” and advises researchers to “do the very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study” (p. 37).

## CHAPTER THREE

### Actual (Contextual) Changes

The Education Quality Improvement Act (Bill 160), brought into law in 1998, made a number of modifications affecting education in Ontario. Removal of the principals and vice-principals from membership in of O.S.S.T.F was one of these legislated changes. This study explores the effects of these contextual changes, resulting from the new legislation, on the culture of a group of secondary school administrators.

Although context is frequently thought of as mere background and can be a somewhat ambivalent term, in this case, context means the specific environment in which this secondary management group worked during the initial implementation phases of Bill 160. According to Kaufman and Herman , cited in Karpicke and Murphy (1996), organizations, like people, have personalities, unique ways they do business, ways in which employees work with each other and with the outside world” (p. 26). Of course, the ways that people do business affects their culture which “is the composite of the values and beliefs of the people within the organization” causing the group to operate “within a common set of assumptions about the ways things are done” (p. 26). Within the parameters of this paper, changes in the work environment (context) of the secondary administrators’ group resulted in a reshaping of its culture. The two items that have most affected this group’s context were changes to the contract and to past practices. The following

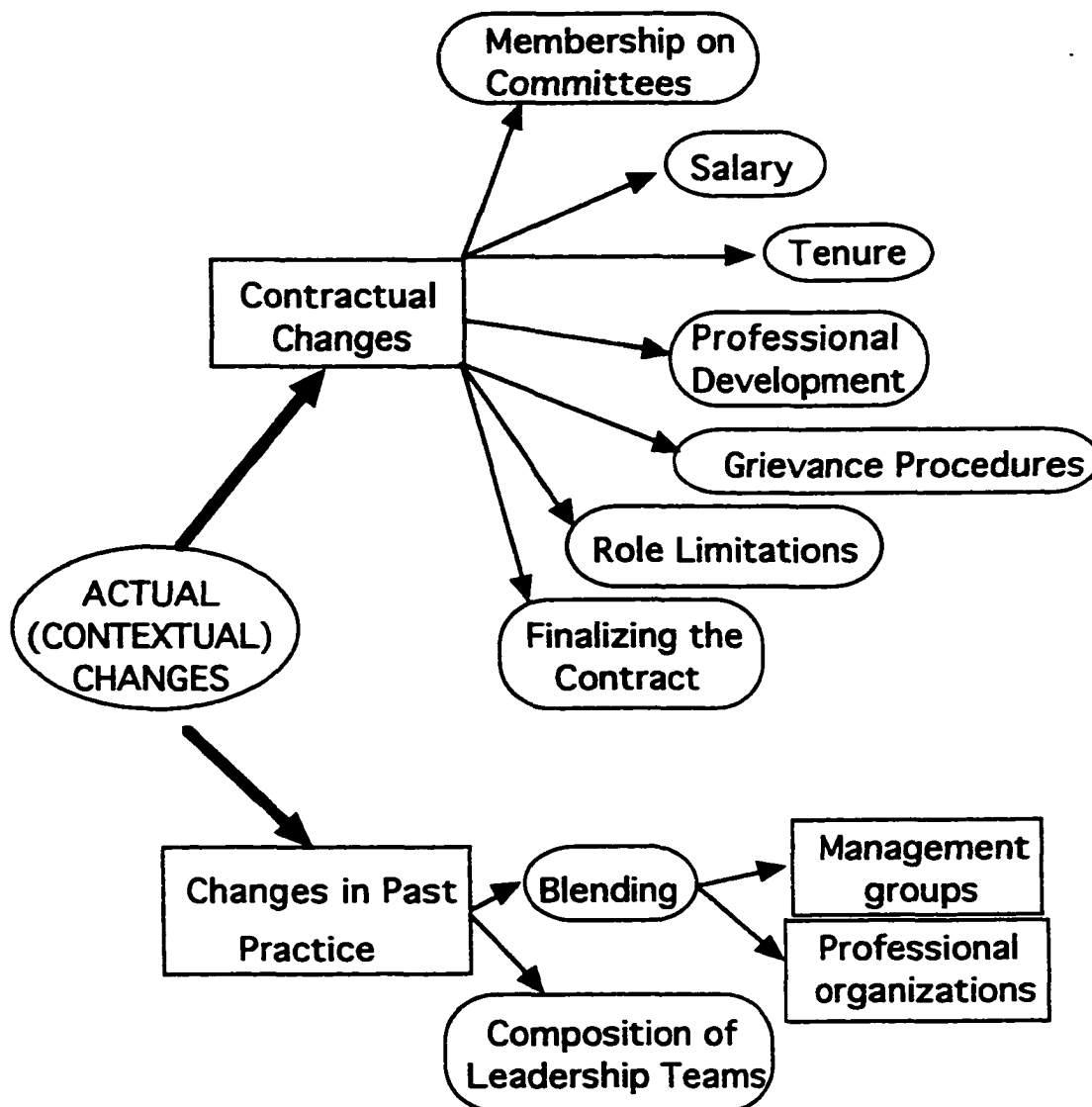


Diagram 1. Actual (Contextual) Changes

### Contractual Changes

Contract changes influencing the secondary management group were effective as of April 1, 1999. Before this date, the Secondary and Elementary administrators had separate contracts. When the legislation removed them from the federations, the two groups were consolidated

contractually by the Board under the term 'Management Group'. Almost all differentiation between what had been two separate 'panels' of administration, elementary and secondary, disappeared. The new 'a leader is a leader' philosophy of the Board was the rationale for combining the two groups.

Before 1998, secondary administrators were included in the O.S.S.T.F. collective agreement with the Board of Education. Over the years, they participated in and often chaired contract negotiation teams. Elementary administrators were rarely involved in contract negotiations. Thus, the professional lives of elementary and secondary members experienced different changes, depending on the group to which they belonged. However, in this paper, the changes affecting secondary principals and vice-principals are described.

Prior to 1998, contracts with the Board of Education, when they were negotiated through collective bargaining procedures, included processes for deciding memberships on Board committees for principals and vice-principals, salary grids and benefit packages, grievance procedures and role limitations. This changed in the spring of 1998. The Management Group's consolidated contract was negotiated when representatives of the Ontario Principals' Council (OPC), three secondary and three elementary administrators, met with the superintendent of Human Resources to put together ideas for a common section, as part of individual contracts, for administrators of the Lakehead District School Board. The new contract is not as positive for

secondary administrators as was the previous one. Some items from the previous collective agreement that were altered or excluded from the new contract were: salary, tenure, funding for professional development, grievance procedures and membership on Board committees.

### **Membership on Board Committees**

Before 1998, membership on Board standing committees was decided by the secondary administrators' group. Members filled out a survey that allowed them to indicate the committees on which they preferred to serve, according to interest and work load. A nominating committee would then make the final choices which were brought back to another meeting for approval. The finalized list of committee representatives would then be forwarded to the Board's senior administrators. When new committees were required, the contract mandated that the senior administrators request the secondary group to appoint a member. Since membership on committees is viewed as a vehicle for members to demonstrate leadership skills with a view to promotion, the committee appointments were considered very carefully to allow each person a fair chance to showcase his / her skills to the Board's senior administrators who would be deciding on future promotions. These previous processes for assigning members to committees were not included in the new contract. The Senior administrators reserved this as a 'management right'. Thus, the superintendents assumed the sole power to make appointments to committees.

## Salary

As well as eliminating the process for committee assignments, the new contract had serious implications for administrators' salaries. Salary grids were included in the previous contract that allowed for three years of increment to a maximum salary for experienced principals and vice-principals. Under the new contract, salary was based solely on designation as principal or vice-principal and size of school. There were no elementary / secondary salary differentiation in this new contract. The new maximum salary for secondary vice-principals was approximately one thousand dollars less than in the previous contract negotiated with O.S.S.T.F.. Some elementary principals and vice-principals received an increase in salary over their previous contract. The amount of varied depending on the size of school he / she was administering. For the rest, salary remained the same, that is no one received a decrease to the new maximum salary.

## Tenure

Tenure was also affected by the new contract. In the past, newly appointed administrators were placed on a three-year probationary period after which the position was made permanent, or the person returned to his or her former teaching / administrative position. Currently, new administrators are appointed for three years, renewable on approval by the Boards' senior administration. There is no possibility of tenure. However, the incumbents, who already had tenure under the O.S.S.T.F. agreement,

were grandfathered to have tenure in the new contract. This created two different classes of administrators: those with tenure and those newly appointed without tenure.

### **Professional Development**

Another change occurred in the benefit package. The previous benefit package included professional development funds that were administered by the secondary administrators' group itself. Application for up to one thousand dollars per year could be made. Since not every member desired to attend a conference every year, there were always enough funds available for those who did want to go out of town. The fund was also used for a year-end dinner with a speaker chosen for his / her expertise in an area of particular interest to the whole group.

In the new contract, the professional development fund, previously for secondary administrators only, was distributed over all of the vice-principals, elementary and secondary. Each vice-principal was allotted four hundred dollars per year. Principals, in this new contract, were allotted nine hundred dollars. Application had to be made to a superintendent to access the funds. The year-end dinner was replaced by a two-day seminar for all administrators, which was, again, organized by the superintendents. Consequently, all Board-funded professional development was now controlled by the superintendents.

### **Grievance procedures**



A further change in the new contract was the procedure for grievances. In the previous contract, the Contract Maintenance Committee brought forward grievances to Senior Administration on behalf of members. In the new agreement, individual principals and vice-principals are expected to forward any concerns to a superintendent. Issues which might be submitted to a superintendent would include unequal allocation of resources or job performance problems involving a member of a union. There was no provision for arbitration if a member had a grievance concerning a superintendent.

### Role limitations

Linked to the lack of a grievance procedure is the fluctuating role of school administrators. Formerly, the school administrators' job description was limited by the contract restrictions of the O.S.S.T.F. contract as well as the contracts of other groups. There was never a time when they would be expected to do the jobs of any of the other union members associated with the Board. Secondary and elementary administrators now sit on negotiating teams across the 'table' from teachers, custodians, secretaries and others. In the event that any of these groups were to go on strike, administrators would be required to complete custodial or secretarial tasks in order to keep schools functioning. Refusing a task assigned to them by senior administrators would constitute 'just cause' for dismissal.

### Finalizing the Contract

When Bill 160 became law in 1998, elementary and secondary

administrators were required to sign individual contracts before April 1, 1999 or return to the teachers' federation(s) in the last position held before being appointed an administrator. For incumbent principals and vice-principals, one of the most important positive aspects of this contract was the guarantee that, unlike new appointees, they would have job security, as administrators, until retirement. All of the administrators chose to sign a contract, even though there may have been some changes that they did not appreciate.

These contractual shifts have had far reaching effects on individuals and the group. The shifts behave like dominoes: the contract alterations have modified the work place setting (the context) and the context, in turn, has profound influences on the culture.

### Changes in Past Practices

Contractual changes were drastic, but there were alterations in past practices which were also significant after 1998. The 'all for one and one for all' philosophy, which respondents reported to be an aspect of the former culture of secondary schools, seems to have disappeared. Secondary and elementary administrators, previously separated for management and professional purposes, are now blended into one management / professional group. The previously accepted method for composing school administrative teams has also been altered.

## **Blending**

The six secondary schools in this Board used to be closely affiliated. Although some composite schools had specialized technical programs and one school was the French immersion site, most students attended the school designated by the residence boundaries. In the past, administrators were aware of and supportive of individual school initiatives. They collaborated and participated in problem solving. For example, they shared strategies on how to maximize grants for computer purchases. Dolan, cited in Leithwood (1995), describes the principal operating in such an environment “as a ‘deep coordinator’ working in fundamentally interdependent ways within the school and community, and externally with the wider system” (p. 28). These cooperative sessions occurred at the secondary administrators’ monthly meetings.

The Board’s current Operational Plan directs each school to develop partnerships with community organizations and businesses. For example, the Hospitality Network and Tourism course is connected to local hotels. The Plan also requires each school to decide on a ‘centre of excellence’ (area of special focus) to allow parents to have more choice in the selection of a secondary school, since students are allowed to attend any school regardless of where they live.

These particular changes in past practices have led to significant modifications to relationships among secondary administrators. Altered relationships contribute to changes in culture.

### Management groups

Past precedents dictated that management meetings for elementary and secondary administrators were separate. After the groups were joined, they met together once a month for a management meeting with a common agenda. Since neither elementary or secondary administrators within the group had particular interest in the problems specific to the other group, complaints caused the superintendents to change the format to allow the groups to meet separately after common agenda items had been completed. Currently, the groups meet together once a month for a common agenda, followed by separation into elementary and secondary sections. The secondary administrators' meeting was longer than that of the elementary administrators.

### Professional organizations

Prior to 1998, the secondary and elementary administrators belonged to separate professional organizations: Secondary Administrators' Association (SAA), a subgroup of O.S.S.T.F., and Elementary Administrators (EA), a subgroup of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO). Secondary school administrators' meetings were organized by an administrative team from one secondary school on a rotational basis. The principal chaired, and the vice-principal(s) took on the roles of secretary and treasurer. A forty-dollar fee was collected from members which was then used for a number of special dinner meetings (i.e. retirement dinner)

and any benevolent gifts needed during the year. All secondary school administrators and members of the vice-principals' short list (vice-principals in waiting) attended and participated. These meetings were held once each month or more often as the need arose. With the exception of one principal, everyone attended unless he / she was ill or out of the city. The venue was the library of the host school. These were evening meetings which allowed the participants to go home, have supper and change out of their work clothes. Refreshments were provided by the Chair. Agenda items were solicited prior to the meeting. Minutes were taken and distributed after each meeting. Each member was able to share opinions and feelings on the issues being discussed.

The Elementary Administrators' group was governed by an executive which was elected yearly. It met monthly for a dinner meeting at one of the local hotels. The entire group of approximately sixty members was scheduled to meet at a local hotel at the end of the school day four times per year. Refreshments were provided. The yearly membership fee was ninety dollars. The members of the elementary short list were not invited to attend. Once each year there was a dinner meeting /social. Approximately one half of the entire group attended each meeting, the purpose of which was to discuss issues and have updates on Ministry and Board initiatives. Because the group was so large, it was difficult for everyone to actively participate.

Since the Ontario school administrators were removed from their respective professional organizations, a new provincial professional

organization, with local branches, was established - The Ontario Principals' Council or OPC. This organization represents principals and vice-principals both elementary and secondary. Peggy Sweeney, Senior Communications Consultant for OPC, recounts the history and mandate of this new professional society:

OPC was established in 1998 when principals and vice-principals were removed from the teacher federations under the Education Quality Improvement Act (Bill 160). OPC was set up to represent the interests of its members and provide the legal support and advice that was previously available through the unions. In the beginning, the goal of OPC was mainly to make sure principals and vice-principals were legally protected in their role, and to offer them some of the benefits of the union, such as life insurance and LTD. (Field Notes, p. 41-42).

In September 1998, it was agreed by the secondary administrators that the Chair of the secondary administrators' group approach the E.A. executive to explore a possible amalgamation of elementary and secondary administrators [OPC] (Field Notes, p. 19). During conversations to institute OPC, it was decided that OPC would have an executive including co-presidents - one elementary and one secondary - for the first year. The proceedings of this group mirror many of the characteristics of the former elementary group: the agenda items for the OPC meetings are solicited from the membership which excludes the people on the administrators' short list; the local OPC executive is elected yearly; the executive meetings are held

once a month as a dinner meeting and at large membership meetings are held occasionally at a local golf club to discuss issues of concern. In addition to a rebate from OPC provincial membership fees, there is a local levy on each principal and vice-principal of fifty dollars. Secondary members are in the minority in OPC (approximately twenty-five percent). The operation of OPC is closer to the style of the previous Elementary Administrators' group than it is to the former Secondary Administrators' Association, making it difficult for most of the secondary administrators to identify with it.

### Composition of Leadership Teams

Placement of administrators has always been a management right. It was past practice for superintendents to interview each administrator and gather input regarding his / her future. Principals had a great deal of influence over who would make up the leadership team at their school. They were given two or three candidates from which to choose, and their wishes were taken into consideration in the final decision (Field Notes, p. 26). Although the new contract maintains these decisions as a Senior Administration management right, they are still to be made in consultation with the affected parties.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Findings

This chapter describes the responses of the secondary group to the contextual changes outlined in the last section and the effects of environmental modifications on the secondary administrators' culture. As previously mentioned, the analysis of the changes in the culture of this group of secondary school administrators is based on an inventory questionnaire (see Appendix) applying the work of Patterson, Purkey and Parker as outlined by Sergiovanni and Starratt(1998). Deal and Peterson (1991) describe the culture of an organization as consisting of the “stable, underlying social meanings that shape beliefs and behavior over time” (p. 7). These deep patterns of values, beliefs and traditions are formed over the course of the organization’s history and are the “invisible, taken for granted, flow of beliefs and assumptions [that] give meaning to what people say and do... and shape how they [members] interpret hundreds of daily transactions” (p. 7). Sergiovanni and Starratt (1998), state that culture “provides a sense of purpose and defines a “shared covenant” (p. 193). As well, it “sustains a strong sense of identity ... a sense of personal causation ...high responsibility for work outcomes ... and a shared commitment to common goals” (p. 193). The survey, which asked respondents to identify any changes since the Secondary Administrator’s Group had been removed from O.S.S.T.F., was sent to all members of the group; seven of eighteen



response sheets were returned. Significant change was reported in all areas. The effects on the culture of this group is an integral part of the findings of this study.

In this report, the members of this group will be cited using pseudonyms formed from the fictional representatives of the group. The 'voices' that speak here for the group are composites. Bill and Stu provided have the most lines; Bill expresses the views of most principals and Stu reflects the views of most vice-principals. When there are conflicting opinions or the need to present other positions, minor players appear (George, Julie, Ann, Grace). Names, when used in direct quotations from respondents, are replaced with pseudonyms (Bob, Ron, Dan).

### Previous Context

The responses to the survey reflected a perception of loss associated with the secondary school principals' group. This group had been an integral and powerful subgroup of O.S.S.T.F. since its inception in 1919. In eighty years, the secondary administrators' group developed, according to the perceptions of the participants, a solid, and enduring culture with a strong sense of purpose and community. Members believed strongly in empowering each other, collaborating in decision making, and recognizing and celebrating individual diversity and accomplishments. There existed a strong common bond based on trust, caring and integrity.

## Contract

The changes have affected relationships among secondary group members, between secondary and elementary administrators, and between secondary group members and the senior administration. Membership on committees has altered relationships internal to the group as well as with senior administrators. The issues involving salary, benefits, tenure and holidays resulted in rifts between secondary and elementary administrators. Grievance procedures and role limitations resulted in different relationships with Senior administrators. All of these issues had effects on the culture of this group of secondary administrators.

### Membership on Committees

Evans (1996) states that “change almost always generates friction, both between individuals and between groups, because it invariably produces winners and losers” (p. 35). It became evident over time that some members within the secondary administrators’ group were losing their power and status while others are increasing their power and status. One of these changes causing friction involved the change in the membership selection process for Board committees. Freed from the contractual restriction of requesting the secondary group to nominate members to Board committees, a perception developed that superintendents were using their new found power to, as Stu observed, “anoint” favored individuals to positions that increased influence and face. Stu noticed that “major committees are being

formed, and I am not invited. I see the same names over and over” (Field Notes, p. 41).

Gainey warned that “discrimination, nepotism, patronage and the longevity of the ‘good-old-boy’ system are often political factors” in the making of the decision about who will be winners and losers. (p. 29) This declaration echoes the perception of some of the respondents. Bill maintained that one of the ‘winners’ got his new job as a “reward for ... his good old boys’ relationship with [one superintendent and the director]” (Field Notes, p. 29). The rules may not have changed but the gender of the players seems to have evolved. Since three of the senior administrators are female, Bill added that it is not just an old-boys’ club but a “new -girls’ club” as well (Field Notes, p. 29). He commented further:

I thought that women are supposed to be so democratic and fair and believe in equity for all. All that is crap! They are doing the same thing now as men have been ... doing. How many elementary male faces do you see heading major committees now? The two female superintendents are from elementary and they are favouring females. (Field Notes, pp. 29, 40)

Stu agreed saying that it is “still the old-boys’ club way of doing leadership. Everyone is too busy toadying up to the powerful ones to get any meaningful work done” (Field Notes, p. 35).

Participants were also concerned about the quality of decision making done by these committees, since the only people who would disagree with a

direction are “either secure in a principalship or know they aren’t going anywhere anyway” (Field Notes, p. 32).

There was also a sense that, once a person is cast as a ‘loser’, this standing cannot be altered. Stu found that it is almost impossible to find out what happened to reduce him to ‘loser’ status maintaining that “nobody has the balls to tell you why you aren’t being considered as leadership material any more” (Field Notes, p. 36). He is frustrated that he is unable to find a way to change how others feel about his ability:

In my post interview, the time I didn’t get on the short list, I asked what I could do to improve my chances for next time. I was told ‘Nothing just keep doing what you are doing’. I even asked, since I had not been appointed to any committees, if I could expect to finish my career as a vice-principal. He [superintendent] said that if they had a need for any of my skills, they would call on me. When my ego is strong, I think they don’t appoint me to committees because they have already seen enough of me to know that I am ready to move on - but really I know that that isn’t true - they have written me off.

(Field Notes, p. 36)

Being a ‘loser’ with its loss of status and face, engendered feelings of resentment. Stu complained that,

never knowing where you stand makes you angry and resentful of every smile or word of welcome given by a super or the director to someone else. We (the other losers)

talk about it all the time - how we are out of the loop and not the 'favourites'. There is too much internal dialogue - all the time - emotions up and down - wearing me down thinking about it all the time. (Field Notes, pp. 36, 38)

Even in past practice it was possible to become a 'loser' once a person was assigned to a committee by the previous contractual process. As Bill said, "being on a committee isn't necessarily a good thing. It can be a career stopper if you screw up" (Field Notes, p. 23). But, in the past, members had a chance to demonstrate leadership skills. Now they may not even get that chance unless they are connected in some way to a Senior administrator or coordinator. The perceptions of unfairness and the feelings of impotence among some vice-principals, were a direct result of the committee selection process. These feelings, probably the single most critical fallout of the changes in past practice, were beginning to alter the level of commitment some participants had to their jobs.

### Power shifts

Evans (1996) quotes Marris saying that each of us " constructs an occupational identity" and that "change often discredits this [identity], challenging our purposes and identities and devaluing our skills" (p. 33). He also cites Bolman and Deal who warn that the further effect of change is that it "stirs fear because it challenges competence and power, creates confusion and conflict, and risks the loss of continuity and meaning" (p. 33). Evans adds that "when radical change reshapes roles and disrupts the

stability of our work place, it threatens our very sense of purpose” (Evans, 1993, p. 20). He believes that those who control organizations may not understand that people “suffer bereavement not just from the death of loved ones, but from the discrediting of the assumptions by which [they] live and make sense of [their] world and [their] work” (p. 20).

These references to loss of purpose and identity also appeared in discussions with the respondents. It was the perception of the participants that, besides the displacement of some administrators and the resulting bitterness, the new committee selection process had shifted the power in the group, creating winners as well as losers. Most felt that some members of the secondary administrators’ group were becoming more influential and powerful within the organization. This was primarily due to relationships that existed between this group and the senior administrators. In the past, personal relationships with senior administrators had existed, however, this was not the only route to promotion for secondary administrators.

Jane was labelled a winner in this post-1998 era. She had been appointed to a number of high level influential committees and had made the short list for promotion. Stu commented that she “works hard and she is a real friend of mine but she is a ‘yes man’ for the superintendents” (Field Notes, p. 35). The belief existed that Jane’s social relationship with one of the superintendents has positively influenced her career. Bernstein and Rozen (1992) confirm that “qualifications, and references aside, the final accolade of tribal membership goes to the people we like best - the people

who can show us what we want to see. ... The real question ... is 'Do we want to work with this person?' " (p. 32).

Jane acknowledged that there are inequities in the present system. She reflected,

I feel bad about it. There are others who have more experience than I have. But what am I supposed to do - tell them [superintendents] that I won't serve? What would that do to my chances to be a principal? ... [I] don't have a choice (Field Notes, p. 42).

Marshall, Patterson, Rodgers, and Steele (1996) state that a "uniform mind set frames administrative activity in a bureaucratic hierarchy of school administration: do whatever it takes - make deals, compromise, 'satisfice', conform - to attain a higher position" (p. 274). Such a mind set appeared to become an increasing trend in this Board (Responses, p. 3), a mind set that was previously inhibited by the collaborative nature of the group.

Bill believed that other winners or as Evans (1996) calls them 'barons' (p. 241), gained early access to crucial information and which resulted in more power to "get their own way" even when it is "obviously unfair" to the rest of the group. These same individuals also had "more than their share of exposure" on significant committees. He added,

That's how you tell who's made it. Look at the membership on the committees higher in the flow chart - the important decision-making ones - not the lower ones - they do all the work - they are for losers. There is no important recognition

for being on those lower ones. (Field Notes, p. 42)

George was perceived as a 'baron' with a very high profile in the organization. Bill characterized George as the "Prince as in Machiavelli" and added that "principals' meetings are cancelled when he [George] goes fishing" (Field Notes, p. 30, 34). However, George acknowledged being very comfortable with his situation. He remarked,

You have to do what is best for your own school. If you play the game well, you get the job done. ... [ You] have to have influence over the direction you want to go. You do what you have to - get on the right committees, talk to the right people, Why would you not?" (Field Notes, p. 22)

Thus, some secondary administrators were more negatively affected by the changes in how the organization operated than are others. Stu sighed as he lamented: "I am grieving. I will retire as soon as I can.... I was prepared to go to the ninety factor, but not now" (Field Notes, p. 32). It was felt that the new committee selection process had left a legacy of bitterness and quite possibly reduced it to a "yes man" power structure.

According to the participants in this study, the removal of the secondary administrators' ability to appoint members to Board committees profoundly effected the group's sense of purpose and identity and had seriously impacted the ability of the group to empower individual members.

Respondents maintained that contributing input to Board decisions



should be a major purpose of secondary school administrators. In the past, the group decided who was most “expert” and appointed this person to the appropriate committee. Since Bill 160’s implementation, they now believed that the concept of decisions being made by those most “expert” was disappearing. No longer was there a guarantee that the group’s representative provided input that was representative of or approved by the group. Stu posed a question and provided his own answer: “Who decides ‘who is most expert’ ? ... central office not our peers” (Responses, p. 2). Bill summarized the opinions of the group:

If you are asked to be on a system committee [you cannot] decline (if you are interested in promotion) regardless of whether you feel you are ‘expert’ or not. No one will say - thanks for asking but \_\_\_\_\_ has a lot more background than I have in this area. So people get on committees who may or may not be able to contribute as well as one of the others. No one comments except privately about why someone has been selected. (Responses, p. 2)

Participation in Board direction setting had previously been central to the role of the secondary administrators’ group. Past contractual processes guaranteed that quality input was provided from the whole group. However, the group now felt that without that quality input, Board decisions would be impaired. Stu noticed a “lack of planning ...[and that] decisions are made, often contradictory, and often on the fly” (Field Notes, p. 29).

A large part of the empowerment function of the group culture had

been truncated by the reduction in chances for the group to mentor individuals. Bill was sorry that the group could no longer “provide opportunities and encourage all members to grow and get exposure....some members are called upon to do it all” (Responses, p. 3). Stu echoed Bill's belief: “Certain people ‘only’ are being ‘empowered’ for system decisions - the same few” (Responses, p. 1). The perception that the group was developing factions based on personal relationships or gender appeared to be damaging its culture, and dividing the formerly cohesive association.

### Salary

Secondary administrators were also upset about the new contract which they perceived to have advantaged the elementary group at the expense of the secondary group. Stu, annoyed about the monetary gains of the elementary group, stated: “Elementary are getting the better deal.... sit with their hands out... getting lots of stuff including a large increase in salary - not Secondary”(Field Notes, p. 13).

Secondary administrators were resentful of this salary increase because they believed that the job, at the secondary level, was harder and the hours longer. Stu vented, “They assume that their jobs are equal to ours and so the pay should be the same too. I don't think they are equal at all” (Field Notes, p. 13). Bill added that it is “hard for us to even look at [elementary school principal] gloat over his huge increase in salary.... Name me an elementary school principal who would choose to take on a secondary school vice-principalship now that their salary is more ... and the stress is

lower” (Field Notes, pp. 19, 37).

Bill commented on the issue of the inequitable work year considering the increase in elementary salaries:

Elementary [administrators] aren't even in schools this summer like we are....[they] walk out of their buildings at the end of June and not [sic] go back until the first of September. We didn't get out 'til the second week in July and went back the third week of August. Now that we all get six weeks holiday, the Board office has to call a meeting the third week in August to make sure they [elementary] are back. They are not really in their buildings anyway - just available by cell phone.

(Field Notes, p. 13, 30)

A perception existed that there was an imbalance in role and responsibilities between secondary and elementary administrators that should be reflected in salary. With a few exceptions, most elementary schools are much smaller than most secondary schools with a resultant decrease in staff. The respondents believed that dealing with teenagers was more difficult and stressful than dealing with children and preteens. The secondary administrators resented that this imbalance, which in previous contracts was reflected in differentiated salary, was not being rectified.

There was the perception that salary is the main cause of the altered the power relationships in the Board. As previously noted, the secondary school administrators had, in the past, held a very powerful position within

the educational community. This group had negotiated past contracts that allowed for salaries and benefits that were superior to those of elementary school administrators.

Although the actual losses for secondary school administrators were limited to the reduction in the secondary vice-principal's salary by one thousand dollars, and the reduction of the amount of professional development money available to them, the group's belief was that its previously hard fought gains have been lost in the new contract. The perception existed that the Senior administrators used contract negotiations in this new context as a way to, as Bill stated, "break the secondary admin group [which] the senior administrators thought ... wielded altogether too much power" (Field Notes, p. 33).

### Tenure

As previously mentioned, in the post-Bill 160 era, if an administrator's job is not renewed, an automatic fall back to a teaching position no longer existed, as it had prior to 1998. Among the issues that were making the secondary administrators' job less attractive, this was the one that caused the most concern for those teachers considering the move to an administrative position.

Loss of tenure for new administrators not only increased the ability of the Senior administrators to control secondary school administrators but resulted in a shortage of internal candidates applying for these positions. As well, the respondents expressed the belief that current appointees must be

loyal to the superintendents in order to maintain their jobs. If loyalties were divided, it would be very difficult for the secondary administrators to maintain a strong culture.

### Professional Development (PD)

The erosion of the benefit package reduced the status of the secondary administrators even further. The PD changes were viewed as an example of the things that took the secondary group years to negotiate but now had to be shared with the elementary group. Although there was the same amount of money for PD in the contract, the spreading of the professional development dollars over thirty-six vice-principals instead of sixteen secondary administrators caused resentment. When the professional development part of the contract was announced, Stu blurted out: "I sure hope that there are some good conferences in Murillo. Where do they think we can go for \$300.00?" (Field Notes, p. 18 -19). The general feeling of the secondary administrators' group was conveyed by the phrase "we give - they take", that is the elementary administrators "whisked in and capitalized on [their] hard work and got parity" (Field Notes, p. 19).

The reduction of professional development funds available for use by the secondary administrators' group, also resulted in less information being shared among the members of the group. Previously, PD activities were shared within the larger group, resulting in an increased knowledge for all of them. Since the monthly Monday night Secondary Administrators' meetings

were no longer held, the probability that this sharing would not continue made it difficult for the secondary group to maximize gains in information. The secondary administrators begrudged the loss of their pot of PD. They believed that it would negatively affect the intellectual health of their culture. This financial decision has damaged the previous spirit of cooperation between the two panels.

### Grievance Procedures

When secondary administrators were removed from O.S.S.T.F., this eliminated the protection of a strong union contract, and the grievance process. Members now expressed the belief that there was not a suitable person with whom to discuss wrong doings in a formal sense. OPC supported members if their legal rights have been violated, otherwise concerns must go through the superintendents. This is a problem if the conflict involves superintendents. Stun laments:

Who do I grieve to about that meeting I had with [superintendent] when she called me a liar - she is my superintendent! .... Do we whine to OPC? At least in the past you could call someone you knew at OSSTF just to get a little advice and vent. (Field Notes, p. 36)

This situation resulted in confusion and a fear of consequences relating to the reporting of grievances. Bill developed a plan to deal with it. He said: "I have too many years left. I am going to keep my head down and try to duck the salvos from the superintendents. They have us by the short and curlies" (Field Notes, p. 40). The existence of grievance procedures, which had

allowed the group to take risks, was gone.

### **Role Limitations**

The changing role of the school administrator has become a very current topic in educational literature. Williams and Portin (1997) describe the method for the change as 'layering':

Additional responsibilities are "layered one on top of the other" ..the task or responsibility under consideration demands enough time and attention that the principal must reduce the time and attention given to other necessary responsibilities. At the same time, principals have not been relieved of the other duties and responsibilities that have traditionally been a part of their job e.g., building maintenance and repair, instructional leadership, maintaining a safe and secure environment, responding to teacher and staff requests, conducting...teacher evaluations, managing the budget, and maintaining discipline. (p. 28)

Since no contractual process to address perceived injustice existed, the problem of fluctuating responsibilities of school administrators and their relationships to their co-workers could not be easily resolved. Senior administrators may arbitrarily add duties to the administrators' job description, since no contractual protection exists. For example, during a custodial work stoppage, administrators were assigned custodial duties in order to keep schools open. Bill commented on what happened at the

emergency meeting where these tasks were assigned:

We were told that everyone would have a cleaning plan for after work from 4:30 to 7:30, plus alternate weekends a 7 hour shift - chemicals used to clean - what they are for - ... - how to clean a toilet - how to clean up bodily fluids....There was no attempt to allow the group [members] to air their feelings about the extra hours... no attempt to problem solve e.g. who has health issues, who is assigned to which school. (Field notes, p. 22)

Both having to clean schools and having no opportunity to voice concerns was perceived by this group as confirmation of their lack of status in the eyes of the senior administrators. Stu commented that the “angry response” from the Director and the statement that administrators better “get on board - we are going to do this and we will be successful” (Field Notes, p. 23) affirmed this perception.

The participants wonder how the members of this secondary school administrators’ group can have a sense of community and purpose if they can not be sure from one day to the next what roles they might have to take on in addition to their already full job description. Cleaning urinals and scrubbing floors puts a dent in the concept of cultural identity for this group. The secondary administrators were concerned about the lack of limits defining the group’s identity. The perception existed that the Senior administrators do not have empathy for the already overfull work day of secondary administrators.



The superintendents and the Director made it clear that school administrators had better 'toe the line' or find another job. The respondents believed that they were not expected to question any order given to them and they should no longer expect to be consulted on role related issues. Bill thought that the superintendent "operates on the 'fuck you theory of change' - if you don't like it - fuck you - you know where the door is" (Field Notes, p. 36).

The participants expressed the belief that the superintendents did not seem to understand or appreciate the difficulty of being in an adversarial position with regard to co-workers. Because the school administrators were now classified as management, the expectation that they will serve the Board and not their previous colleagues was clear. One of the most difficult tasks is to sit on the Board's side of a negotiation table across from people who are co-workers during the day. Bill expressed his frustration that he had to negotiate against another union. He had to "look the [them] in the eye [and] say you are only getting \_\_\_% and then go back to work with them in the office the next day. I have to say, 'the Board office has your best interests at heart'. They reply, 'by the way we want a strike mandate - try not to take it personally'" (Field Notes, pp. 19, 37). He wondered how long he can expect good relationships to continue.

Front line administrators resented being placed on the firing line opposite co-workers. They did not feel that they could afford the time away from school to attend the plethora of meetings that these new roles

prescribed.

Add all of the potential responsibilities that might be 'layered' at any time during a strike and it is clear, as Williams and Portin (1997) point out, that "the scale and pace of change are overwhelming... in an increasingly complex environment" and this will lead to a "decline in morale and enthusiasm" (p. 29). This was the case in the post-Bill 160 era.

The changing role was illustrative of how contextual change affects relationships. These various contractual changes had certainly created strained relationships on many levels. Individual stress was apparent. Maintaining a stable definition of culture on which to base values and belief was difficult when the job definition can change at the whim of the Director of Education. Respondents harboured deep resentment and frustration over the new contract. The cracks caused by the changes to the contract were reaching out in several directions, compromising the group's former cultural stability.

### Past Practices

Changes in past practices were building up pressures on a number of fronts. The change from 'all for one and one for all' to 'everyone for him / herself' caused competition to be a serious internal problem for this group. The blended management meetings and the development of a common professional organization (OPC) have implications for elementary / secondary relationships. Decisions related to the composition of leadership

teams became a yearly irritant that fomented negative feelings between Senior administrators and the secondary administrators' group. Since relationships provide the glue that maintains group culture, damage to relationships can destroy it.

### "All for One and One for All"

Fullan in Leithwood (1995) quotes Dolan who describes the principal as a "deep coordinator" working in fundamentally interdependent ways within the school and community, and externally with the wider system" (p. 28). The interdependent coordinating function that was required of principals was possible only with constant communication with other administrators. This regular communication used to occur at the monthly O.S.S.T.F. Association meetings. Bill reflected unhappily on the current rivalry: "We are on our own. We ... used to do things together. The focus was on schools. We are in trouble now that one school has been given unfair advantage. We can't compete" (Field Notes, p. 24). Furthermore, Bill thought that "individuals make decisions at the system level based on their own needs not those of the group as a whole ... decisions that are best for themselves, their school and their friends" (Responses, pp. 1-2). He grieved that there is "no real sense of community left" and adds that at least previously, "because we met regularly, these things were more transparent" (Responses, p. 2). Regarding this issue, Bernstein and Rozen (1992) believe that competitors "don't really see themselves as part of a team. ... [They are] playing a different game. Teamwork, like training, is for underlings" (p. 226).

Bill provided an analogy to explain his observations: “When the water hole shrinks, the animals look at each other differently” (Field Notes, p. 26). His anger about the inequity in resource allocation is described in the following competitive example:

I got the short end of the furniture allotment. I wasn't part of the group that went around and rated the school furniture.... they only used some classes. I didn't even see my rating. (George) and (Bob) got most of the money, nine or ten thousand each. I got thirty-five hundred. Before, the report would have gone to our Monday night meeting for everybody to see....I don't even know who is speaking on our behalf - I want my school's problems represented. (Field Notes, pp. 21, 26)

The participants conveyed that the constant worry about resources and students resulted in a diversion of energy from the daily routine tasks of running a large secondary school. Group members reported that they were tired since competition takes a lot more energy than co-operation. Bill expressed the belief that the time and emotional energy needed for this competition was taking its toll on the operation of the school. He was sorry that he had a “lot less time to spend at school so that they (vice-principals) are left to run the ship” and that he spends “so much mental energy on jockeying for position that a lot of important school things fall through the cracks” (Field Notes p. 27).

The quest for resources and students caused the administrative

teams at individual schools to become isolated. There was a feeling among the participants that trust and integrity were eroding in the group. Group wisdom could no longer be drawn on for support if “you don’t want to show your own hand” (Field Notes, p. 30). Stu added that there was “some “bad blood” with less trust between some than there could be since there was “still a sense of competition rather than co-operation among the group” (Responses, p. 2). Stu believed that it “is hard to know who to trust” since “stuff gets back to the ... Supers when you confide in someone you thought was trustworthy” (Responses, p. 2). He noticed “alignments and conduits” that you have to watch out for. Another respondent thought that trust had not totally disappeared. She “trusts [her] peers for the most part” however she is not sure that trust “can be sustained since OPC is not a vehicle for doing this”(Responses, p. 2). Trust and honesty are related in the area of integrity. Dishonest dealings cause mistrust. Bill asserted that, “There are a lot of clandestine things going on that you hear about after the ‘deed’ is done.... There are real gaps in the honesty umbrella” (Responses, p. 3). He acknowledged the effect of politics on integrity. “Sometimes there are forces prohibiting you from always doing the ethical thing - at least as it relates to the group” (Responses, p. 3). This complicated the basic running of a school.

Stu found that operationally a “single standard of norms is flexible depending on what is going on i.e. registration, secondary school reform, new programs” (Responses, p. 3). He added sarcastically, “Everyone

demonstrates commitment to highest personal & ethical convictions. The definition of highest personal & ethical conditions is, however, relative” (Responses, p. 3).

Bill also was convinced that competition compromises good decision making. He cited a specific program as an example:

The principals made a bad decision because they were competing and only a few had access to information but no one wanted his school to be left out. This program is too expensive to be in all schools. Now we are being held accountable. We are finding out the bad stuff later.

(Field Notes, p. 29)

Pessimistically, Bill summarized the situation: “[We] are at war and you are on your own” (Field Notes, p. 23).

According to the participants, competition had also affected the group’s belief in empowerment. Equal access to information used to be a “given” (Responses, p. 1). Sergiovanni and Starratt (1998) describe adequate communication as an important dimension of organizational health:

Since organizations are not simultaneous face-to-face systems ... the movement of information within them becomes crucial. This dimension of organizational health implies that there is relatively distortion-free communication vertical, horizontal, and across boundaries of the system.... In a healthy organization, there is good and prompt sensing of internal strains. People have the information they need and have gotten it without exerting undue efforts. (p. 179)

The lack of empowerment and access to information is a big issue for Stu:

We don't have any mechanism any more (since we are not meeting in a productive sense) - for everyone to have equal access to information.

V-P's only have access to info filtered through their Principal from principals' meetings. (Responses, p. 1)

A number of the vice-principal respondents were also feeling undervalued.

Stu, like the others, was losing his interest in group activities and felt very isolated. He declared: "I have never felt so out of the loop .... I used to care about everything but now I just care about small things related to my school" (Responses, p. 1).

Sergiovanni and Starratt (1998) maintain that it is natural for people to "feel that they have a say in the matters that influence them. They want to be remembered, and noticed, to be considered important. The formula for success is simple and straightforward. When these conditions do not exist, morale sinks" (p. 9). In the past, recognition of group members for achievements was a routine group activity which added to the sense of community in the group. Accomplishments were acknowledged with verbal mention and with congratulatory cards or flowers. These customs, as part of the group's formal process, had faded. Sam stated that "the competitive atmosphere is becoming an over-riding consideration.... When someone takes a chance or finds a new and better idea, the others are envious and mad that they didn't think of it first" (Responses, p. 3).

For these respondents, the languishing sense of community, trust and

integrity, empowerment and recognition resulted in escalating feelings of isolation. As isolated individuals, they wonder if they will be able to sustain a group culture.

### Contrived Collegiality

The Board's mandated amalgamation of the elementary and secondary school groups and the formation of OPC has created a participatory, collaborative structure producing what Evans (1996) calls "contrived collegiality" (p. 50). These secondary administrators expressed the belief that they had little in common with their elementary colleagues. They report that common management meetings and the operation of OPC cause constant aggravation and affect the sense of identity by blurring the previous purpose and sense of direction of the secondary administrators' group. When the monthly secondary administrators' meetings were abolished, this effectively halted meaningful communication in the group. This lack of dialogue may have been the most important cause of the cultural disorder felt by the group. Each respondent mentioned the lack of dialogue in the group as being responsible for the loss of direction. Bill acknowledged: "The group has changed. The sense of direction is being lost.... Part of this is due to declining enrollment & resources but the largest component is the lack of unified sense of direction" (Responses, p.1). He blamed the disbanding of the Association for the lack of direction.



## Management Meetings

The secondary administrators continued to be annoyed by the joint management meetings. Items of little interest to secondary administrators continued to appear on the common part of the agenda. Bill had little interest in spending any time discussing “JK / SK registration” or “Violence in the School” when the only concern was from [an elementary administrator] who wanted to discuss “what to do when some kid pushes another one down on the playground” (Field Notes pp. 26, 31-32). Bill quipped that “If that’s all that they have to think about - they should come over and deal with knives and taking kids to the hospital after fist fights” (Field Notes, p. 32).

Routinely, the secondary administrators’ agenda took much longer to complete than did the elementary administrators’ agenda. Stu saw the elementary people “waving at us through the windows as they get into their cars at 5:00 - we get to leave at 6:50” (Field Notes, p. 32). The respondents resented the extra time they have to spend at meetings that their elementary colleagues do not.

The lack of attention to planning of these meetings by senior administrators and the Chair of the planning group, who is an elementary principal, often resulted in situations which challenged the status of the secondary administrators’ group. For example, at one meeting, after the common agenda, the elementary administrators stayed in the large meeting room of the hotel. Because no breakout room was arranged, the secondary

administrators met in the hallway beside the men's washroom. As well as the music in the hallway being distracting to the discussion, there were not enough chairs for everyone. During the meeting in the hotel hallway, four hotel guests walked through the group to get to rooms or to go to the washroom. Bill stated emphatically: "Boy, how low we have fallen!" (Field Notes, p. 35).

There was a perception by the secondary administrators, that management meetings did not allow a forum where dialogue can take place. In order to have a sense of direction, a group has to be able to dialogue constantly especially when change is happening. Bill says, "We don't meet in a format that encourages real dialogue - for the most part - we just listen.... under the watchful eyes of the Supers" (Responses, p. 1).

### OPC

#### Mentoring

Participants were particularly sorry that, since the monthly O.S.S.T.F. management meetings were defunct, the secondary group had become fragmented causing its very important mentoring function to disappear. "As a result of having no responsibility, other than administrative, for communicating within the group. Secondary Administrators have not had the opportunity to maintain the same cohesive focus we have had in the past" (Responses, p. 1). Stu sensed that the group still has a feeling of ownership but "it is deteriorating fast since there are really 2 groups now - the

principals and the vice-principals. The principals still connect because they meet regularly but the vice-principals are drifting away” (Responses, p. 1). The new members in the community were not receiving the coaching attention that had been transferred in the past primarily because they are not together long enough in an appropriate forum. Stu, expressing concern for them and the colleagues to come, wondered how “the new members on the short list will survive without that rich experience we had listening and participating in the Association meetings.” He believed that none of his courses prepared him for his job, but he “can’t say enough about how much those meetings helped” (Responses, p. 1). Most members of the group felt that the valuable, informal, mentoring for new initiates that previously occurred during the Association meetings was a critical loss. In support of these observations, Shein, quoted by Evans(1996), commented that mentoring as a form of cultural education is “so automatic and ingrained in the organization’s routine practices that [it is] automatically taught to its new members, by both precept and example, as ‘the correct way to perceive, think, and feel’ about problems” (p. 41).

### Fragmentation

The consensus of the respondents was that the former strong sense of community was fading. Stu summarized the comments indicating that the deteriorating sense of community is a concern. He declared:

No - we don’t value an atmosphere of sharing and encouraging within the group.... If we valued the importance of members understanding

the group's purposes, we would be meeting by ourselves. There really is nothing preventing our meeting by ourselves - we just don't. Our own secondary group leaders (OPC) do not call any meetings of the secondary group even though they know we need to meet. (Responses, pp. 1-2).

The participants believed that Elementary administrators' 'star is rising' in OPC at the expense of the formerly powerful O.S.S.T.F. subgroup. "We were a very powerful group before - power is diluted now," Bill declared. He expressed the belief that the Senior administrators are "probably happy about this", declaring that it is "not divide and conquer but amalgamate and conquer" (Field Notes, p. 19). Because of this resentment, it is easy to anticipate that the blending of all school administrators in the fledgling OPC would have some 'lumps'. Stu characterized the relationship as "oil and water. We are the water, and there is not much of it. They are the oil - lots of it and they are drowning us out" (Field Notes, p. 26). His comments related to the secondary minority in OPC.

Stu had served on the executive of OPC in its first year. In the following, he remarked on the difference between the Secondary Association meetings and the OPC meetings:

In the secondary admin meetings, conversations were different. At OPC meetings, there is no agenda. Ron ... jumps all over the place.... We used to conceptualize and brainstorm possible solutions to things -

there was focus - actual decisions were made.... There isn't even any PD. [Joyce and Dave] are responsible ... nothing was done. (Field Notes, p. 31)

Two members of the secondary administrator's group supported OPC and encouraged the group to stop meeting as a secondary administrators' group. Stu had serious concerns about this decision. He stressed:

We still need to meet and discuss issues of relevance to us. OPC will meet to discuss negotiated items and we will be the odd men out.

There are fewer of us so we still need to meet together and there are still large issues, management issues, that require secondary to meet. (Field Notes, p. 20)

Grace, an advocate of OPC, responds by vigorously asserting, "Look at reality! This organization doesn't exist.... The old way is history....OPC is the new phoenix on the horizon" (Field Notes, p. 20 ). Most of the respondents believed that this disparity has caused internal rifts. When Stu was asked why he thought these members were in support of OPC, he quipped, "Hey what do you think? It won't hurt when [they] try again for the Principal's short list - helps them get a leg up on the rest of us. They could care less if it is of any actual use to anyone" (Field Notes, pp. 31, 33).

The OPC executive was having trouble collecting the extra fifty dollar levy from the secondary administrators. Bill said: "I'll be damned if I'm paying that extra levy! I'm not going pay for their dinner meetings. They should be able to operate on the rebate from our fees"(Field Notes, pp. 34,

38).

Bill predicted that “ OPC will break down around elementary / secondary issues - within the umbrella group” (Field Notes, p. 20). Stu’s comments supported Bill’s prediction:

I have no OPC involvement now. I’m not interested - it is too elementary school oriented for me to waste my time. Most secondary have stopped attending. Elementary people think elementary - deal with little people, little issues that they make a big thing out of.”

(Field Notes, pp. 20, 31)

#### Lack of Purpose and Direction

The lack of common purpose and direction caused by the reduction in essential communication was exacerbated by the dilution of status and influence felt by the small secondary group as a subset of OPC. Evans (1996) anticipates this difficulty with maintaining a coherent and understood purpose after a structural change. He wrote: “...our structure is formed in the context of specific relationships [with]... other significant adults) and circumstances. Goals and purposes are developed in this context, become associated with it, and cannot easily be severed from it and transferred to a new one” ( pp. 10 -11). Stu reflected on the lack of direction in the OPC group: “I am at a loss to understand our purpose ... we don’t have a large organization to fall back on that is easily recognized & understand[s] its mission. We have not yet found our own purpose - we may each know it, but have not given ‘collective voice’ to it” (Responses, p. 1). According to the

respondents, the lack of dialogue, previously so much a part of the group's history, was largely responsible for these problems with group identity. Evans (1996) cautions that even if these two groups did start to dialogue, the culture of the secondary school administrators would resist "not only new ways of doing things but also new blood as well" (p. 46). Further, he adds: "No strongly cohesive group admits newcomers freely, especially those who challenge its values and practices. The stronger the culture, the more firmly it resists new influences" (p. 46). Combining the elementary and secondary management groups into one functional and professional unit is akin to grouping dogs and cats; they are both mammals, but they have different needs, priorities and experiences.

### Composition of Leadership Teams

Although the blending of two widely different groups was an issue, the lack of consultation needed to compose a good leadership team was reported as an even larger problem as it pertains directly to the day-to-day management of each school. It was crucial for a school administrative team to have a combination of skills. Since the associates worked so closely together, it was important that the members choose to work together. The composition of school leadership teams had become a management right, but the contract indicated that decisions about the composition of administrative teams are supposed to be made in consultation with those affected. Actually, there had been no consultation. Members were no longer

asked by the Senior Administrators where and with whom they would like to work. Stu remembered:

The superintendents used to come around once a year and ask you questions - What you have done that you are proud of? How you are feeling? What has been problematic? If you wanted to move and where? What new challenges you were looking forward to? Now you hardly see them at all - just in passing while they are on another mission.” (Field Notes, p. 36)

The control over the composition of leadership teams was a very important power issue to secondary administrators. The removal of this control is reported to have further affected the unity of the secondary administrators’ group. Stu felt that the lack of input on this critical issue is just another attempt to “fracture” the secondary school administrators. He remarked: “It used to be that principals could have input in selecting the rest of their leadership team based on what skills were needed. Now this is done by the supers who don’t know most of us very well” (Responses, p. 2). A secondary school administrator’s first knowledge of being moved to a new school now came after the decision had made at a Board meeting. Bill said that he found out that Stu was to be his new vice-principal from Stu himself, after his move was ratified by the trustees. Stu was surprised to be moving after having been only one year at his school. “They phoned me out of the blue after the Board meeting. I thought someone was playing a joke” (Field Notes, p. 33). Bill laments: “Is that what ‘consulting’ with staff means?



(Field Notes, p. 19)

Bill expressed the belief that the superintendents see administrators as “plugs that they can pull out and plug back in” (Field Notes, p. 42) and wondered if the senior administrators know that there are different kinds of plugs. Bill doesn’t see any rationale behind these decisions: “ If you think there is a plan - there isn’t. We are in the wilderness” (Field Notes, p. 23). In the past, the maintenance of cultural diversity in the group was maintained by choosing members to work together that had different but complementary skill sets, philosophies and beliefs. Bill, since 1998, noticed that “Central admin pressure to make us all ‘cookie cutter’ administrators stream lines procedures so we all appear the same” (Responses, p. 3). Stu definitely noticed change. He said, “I don’t believe we accept diversity within our own group.... Differences in individual philosophy are not valued. You have to be aligned with someone and be seen as sharing their philosophy” (Responses, p. 3). He linked the loss of a sense of community within the secondary administrators’ group to the apparent loss of diversity. “Now [there is] a sense of bunker mentality. Draw like-minded people around you, hunker down and ride it out” (Responses, p. 3). The participants asserted that having to spend time making mismatched leadership teams function, and developing skill sets that a particular team might be missing, takes energy away from the constant development and maintenance of the robust diversity valued by the group culture. Moreover, the ensuing isolation which results from working on an administrative team that is incompatible

accentuates even more the loss of the larger support group.

Bill summarized the group's feelings about effects of the shifts in distribution of power and how it related to composition of leadership teams. "Now we have decreased power, decreased strength and they (the superintendents) have decreased insight and decreased understanding. How can this result in better education for students?" (Field Notes, p. 23).

### Concluding remarks

The secondary administrators' group maintained that the "divide and conquer" tactics employed by the Senior administrators seem to be working well for them. Continuing deep resentments on the part of the secondary administrators relating to the details of the contract, and changes in past practices had engendered anger, frustration and a sense of loss in the secondary administrators' group. There was a perception that there has been a stripping of power and identity which has caused isolation and impairment in the group's ability to function together. Stu summarized his perceptions of what transpired: "We've been hoola hoop screwed - screwed - round and round - you don't know where it begins or ends" (Field Notes, p. 24).

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion

### Summary

Investigating the question, “What does it mean to secondary school administrators to be removed from the Teachers’ Federation?”, revealed that this contextual change had definitely resulted in cultural changes for this small group. This modification had been instituted by the Minister of Education who wanted to change the efficiency or effectiveness of the Ontario education system. Evans tells us that changes such as this one are “aimed at first-order change... [which] try to improve the efficiency or effectiveness of what we are already doing ... [and which] do not significantly alter the ... way its members perform their roles” (1996, p. 5). This change has actually been, what Evans calls, a second order change which he describes as,

systematic in nature and aim to modify the very way an organization is put together, altering its assumptions, goals, structures, roles and norms.... They require people to not just do old things slightly differently but also to change their beliefs and perceptions. (p. 5)

As previously mentioned, Fullan reminds us that difficulties are guaranteed early in the change process. He maintains that you “cannot have an educational environment in which change is continuously expected, along side a conservative system and expect anything but constant aggravation”

(1993, p. 2). Aggregation certainly describes the feelings of this group. Beliefs, perceptions and other aspects of culture have been drastically affected by the change in context. This study confirms what Malcolm Gladwell, as quoted by Dukacz, asserts, “we are not just sensitive to contexts ... we are exquisitely sensitive to them” (2000a, p. 2).

Termination of the protection of a strong union allowed the Board to develop a contract that impacted several aspects of leadership. In addition, changes in past practices altered the culture of this group. The removal of the previous committee selection process caused power shifts and the perception of unfairness related to promotion. Apprenticeship activities for new members have been left behind since group dialogue is essentially absent. The new professional group (OPC) lacked the effectiveness required to provide this important mentoring function or professional development activities for incumbents. Lack of input from secondary school administrators into the composition of their own leadership teams sometimes affected the efficacy of school operations. The tenure issue appears to be discouraging suitable candidates from applying for leadership positions.

Not only were there leadership problems, but the abandonment of past practices and contractual modifications disturbed the group’s cultural sense of identity. The group started to experience a lack of connection since competition, not collaboration, had become routine. The increase in salary and benefits for the elementary group at the expense of the secondary

group altered the secondary administrators' status and their group identity. Their previous power had also been diluted by the larger number of elementary members in OPC where secondary administrators lacked a voice. Moreover, the addition of tasks to the already full job description of administrators resulted in energy loss and frustration. Since some of these new tasks, for example negotiations, often caused confrontation with co-workers, conflict in the workplace further displaced vigor better spent on more productive areas of the educational agenda. The former Director of Education of this Board predicted, in 1999, that "in 18 - 36 months, we will all be happy...our jobs will become more rewarding, different, challenging" (Field Notes, p. 1). Possibly this prediction had materialized for the senior administrators. Only the "different" and "challenging" parts had come true for the secondary administrators. It had taken only a few years of contextual change to significantly alter a culture that took decades to achieve.

### Limitations

The finding of this study may or may not apply to any other secondary administrators' group in the province. Larger groups, who may not have developed a similarly close group connection, might not have been as affected by these changes. This study could be replicated in larger jurisdictions and with other similarly sized groups to confirm the reliability of this study. A similar study could be carried out to investigate differences in

administrators' cultures based on size of group and elementary or secondary orientation. This could provide some basis for investigating or anticipating reactions to change and possibly clarify the type of support that would best meet the members' needs.

The findings of this study might not apply to those Boards of Education who chose not to amalgamate elementary and secondary administrators for contractual and management purposes. The strong negative feelings that amalgamation and the resultant contract issues engendered might have been avoided in these Boards.

### Implications

Evans (1996) maintains that there are "no 'surgical strikes' in reform, no improvements that only affect an isolated problem without producing any side effects elsewhere" (p. 66). One of the side effects of removing the secondary administrators from their teachers' federation, was the erosion of their culture. Deal (1991) tells us that culture "is a powerful force. Trying to shape it, change it, or fight it can have serious repercussions" (p. 13). The implications of the demise of the secondary administrators' culture for individuals within the group, for the well being of the new professional organization (OPC), and for the other stake holders in this Board of education are disturbing. Sergiovanni and Starratt(1998) list and describe four fairly universal basic workplace needs which must be met for optimum job satisfaction.

### Fitting In

Firstly, people want to “know what is expected of them, how they will fit into the scheme of things, what their responsibilities are, how they will be evaluated, and what their relationships with others are. Change upsets this equilibrium of role definition and expectations” (p. 198). Secondary administrators in this Board relied on their Secondary Association to answer these questions. It provided a common understanding of purpose for the group as well as common values and beliefs. Some secondary vice principals in this study are no longer sure how they fit into the scheme of things. They are quite sure that they no longer have a place, at least not one on the promotion track. They feel that they are no longer empowered either by the senior administrators or by their peers in the secondary administrators’ group. The perception that personal relationships, not professional competence, are affecting promotion is causing fractures in the group which in turn are eroding the quality of cultural affiliations. The feeling of isolation and resulting decline in morale affects job satisfaction.

### Control of the Work Environment

The lack of a predictable role description also threatens the second and third in the list of needs: the need for future certainty and control over work environments and work events. Sergiovanni and Starratt (1998) state that people need to have some “reliability and certainty built into their work lives. Change introduces ambiguity and uncertainty, which threatens the need

for relatively stable, balanced, and predictable work environment” (p. 198). None of the group members can be sure what their role is from one day to the next. Additions to their role can happen at any time. Of most concern were tasks that were added when other unions are on strike, for example, cleaning toilets, or being appointed to a Board negotiating team. Both of these set administrators at odds with valuable members of their school communities and contribute to feelings of exhaustion, both physical and emotional. The role of educational administrators is expanding almost beyond human capability to cope: “Aggregate expectations for the principalship are so exorbitant that they exceed the limits of what might reasonably be expected of one person” (Copeland, 2001, p. 529). The principals and vice-principals in this current study were increasingly expressing concerns that their capacity and willingness to respond to new pressures and responsibilities was reaching the breaking point. Many are reaching the limit of the number of hours they can, or are willing to, devote to the job. Stu was tired of the long hours and declared: “I want to take back half my life” (Field Notes, p. 34). This is not a phenomenon limited to this group or even to Ontario administrators. Williams and Portin (1997) declare that administrators in the United States are having similar troubles:

It is assumed that the principals will be able to absorb the additional duties thrust upon them by reformers, and will do so in an increasingly complex environment. ... Expectations have risen and the number of players has expanded....increasing the scale and complexity of



management tasks...adding exponentially to the complexities and ambiguities of principaling...to the point where [principals are] in danger of sinking under the pressure. (pp. 4-5)

Stress, for the study group too, appeared to be building to health threatening proportions.

As well as role uncertainty, administrators grieve the loss of input into the composition of school administrative teams. Compatibility and complementary skill sets are crucial to a secondary school administrative team. "People do not want to be at the mercy of the system but instead want to ...make decisions that affect their own work lives" (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1998, p. 198). The perception that control over vital work place decisions has been threatened was reducing job satisfaction for some participants. For these group members, this was leading to indifference, and even alienation.

### **Support**

The last of the workplace needs, listed by Sergiovanni and Starratt, is that of social interaction: Most people value and need opportunities to interact with others. People seek support and acceptance from others at work. "This interaction helps people to define and build up their own self-concepts and to reduce the anxiety and fear they experience in a work environment" (Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1998, p. 198). Change is often viewed as threatening these important social interaction patterns. The former culture of this group provided many opportunities for this support.

The respondents in this study no longer believed that this support was available to them or to the newest members of the group.

### Mentoring New Members

Calabrese (1991) reminds us that people are “not born effective principals, they become effective principals as a result of their formal and informal education and their experiences” (p. 31). He goes on to add that “poor leadership can cause irreparable harm to students, teachers and other administrators. Thus...preparing principals is a major ethical concern” (p. 32). The participants think that the current role of a school administrator is too complex for training to be completed in two summer courses. There is too little time to provide the depth and scope that is required, hence, the need for ongoing mentoring. Beginning administrators need support from experienced colleagues to provide professional socialization in addition to the formal training done in principal preparation courses. The transition from vice-principal to principal is eased by participation a group whose culture encourages the type of indirect, authentic professional development, of the type provided by the former Secondary Administrators’ subgroup of O.S.S.T.F.. Listening to experienced administrators problem solve in the monthly association meetings, was like “rehearsals ... [which] allow individuals to open ‘mental file drawers’ and pull out the appropriate file folders for action, rather than sift and sort through piles of possibilities in the attics of their minds” (Nagel, 1990, p. 39). This mentoring provided novices with vicarious experience helping to protect them from the risk of

amateurish actions. If the support provided by the previous culture continues to be unavailable, many avoidable, potentially serious, errors in judgment could be made by inexperienced administrators.

### Communication and Competition

The former Association meetings provided the cultural glue that held this group together. If one aspect of this contextual change could be chosen to be most critical in the damaging of the culture of this group, it would be the cancellation of these meetings. This change in the social interaction pattern is most noticeable in the reduction in communication causing the rise of competition and complementary decline in collaboration which, as reported by respondents, was previously such a strong component of the cultural values of this group. Senge (1994) tells us that collaboration “does not live in the abstract [but] depends ... on the web of information which, in thriving communities, flows freely in all directions”(p. 516). When members know what is going on in the organization, and why, they can act together to achieve common goals without being supervised and monitored. All members formerly were kept apprised, first hand, of information; regular dialogue allowed for “shared mental models for culture building” (Snyder and Snyder, 1996, p. 71). Now, accurate and timely information is not communicated to all members of the group leaving most to feel disconnected. This disconnection creates a sense of ambiguity and fragmentation. Snyder and Snyder (1996) suggest that if groups remain fragmented, “little intrinsic

motivation is developed around a common vision” resulting in consequences for the speed and efficiency of change because “there exists so many different perspectives without a common purpose over time and within a low-functioning communication system” (p. 71).

When people are isolated, it is easier to think of their own needs instead of considering the needs of others. Decisions that may be radically affect other members of the group are made without input from those members. To intensify the problem, limit resources, and fierce competition results. Competition creates hurt feelings which can damage relationships and lead to a further breakdown in communication. Fiedler and Chalmer (1984) quote Fullan who says, “Open communication, trust, support and help, getting results, and job satisfaction and morale are closely interrelated” (p. 199); more fuel for the retirement fire.

### Consequences

The sum these issues, all of which affect the morale and enthusiasm of this group, may be a formula for disaster for educational leadership. More and more members are voicing concerns about continuing in the profession. The number of applicants for administrative vacancies, especially at the secondary school level, is declining. A number of individuals in this group have been so isolated and demoralized that they are unable to contribute to their profession with their former enthusiasm. They are looking forward to retiring as early as they can. The creativity, energy and wisdom of these individuals will be sorely missed by a system which needs to

keep as many of its experienced administrators as possible, particularly in this era of change. On the other hand, the faster these incumbents retire, the faster the memory of the previous culture will fade, making it possible for the newer members to move on with the synthesis of a new culture.

This disenchantment on the part of secondary administrators is having a ripple effect in the educational community. Without administrators to serve as mentors for teachers and Chairs of departments willing to take the next step into an administrative position, educators will not be anxious to accept jobs that the present administrators do not endorse. Reflecting on this situation, Stu stated:

Some senior teachers who would have been very capable candidates said to me, “Do you think I have shit for brains? Who would want that job? The little extra money could never make up for the increased workload and hassles.”... This is the pool that vice-principals traditionally have been taken from. We do not have a single vice-principal that was not first a head of department or Chair. What is going to happen? Where are the administrators going to come from? (Field Notes, pp. 36-37)

This view of administrative work is not just a local one. “The near silence on the lack of qualified candidates applying for the [secondary school] principalship” (Tirozzi, 2001, p. 437), is now now a source of concern in the United States. According to the Canadian Association of Principals (CAP), “the problem of the national shortage of school leaders is endemic.... It has

been cited as a problem by educational authorities in both the United States and Great Britain” (Dukacz, 2000b, p. 4)

Is it possible that this is simply a short term problem that will sort itself out in time? Two other jurisdictions, New Zealand and British Columbia, have sustained similar changes in context. The government of New Zealand, in 1989, instituted far reaching reforms to the Education system. Eight years after these changes, Harold (1997) listed the key results of these changes for principals as reported in the national newspaper under the headline “Principals of schools close to the breaking point.” Harold noted: “The first years were characterized by high workloads, negotiation and contestation” (p. 3). “Morale among principals is low: 34% want out....Recruitment is a problem: few teachers want to be principals” (p. 5).

Closer to home in British Columbia, the provincial government also removed school administrators from the teachers’ unions, albeit with the teachers’ assistance. Effective January 1988, administrators were removed from eligibility in teachers’ unions. However, the teachers had already forcibly expelled them in October 1987 (Buckley, 1998, p. 7). Ten years later, the principals reported that they would have “preferred to remain in the same professional organization as [their] teacher colleagues...[since it] would have made [their] daily work easier” (Buckley, 1998, p. 8). These comments from New Zealand and British Columbia have a familiar ring, echoing the perceptions of the Ontario group which was the focus of this research.

### Recommendations

Several recommendations for secondary and senior administrators could be implemented to begin to remediate this situation. Since it is unlikely that secondary administrators will be able to return to the O.S.S.T.F. fold, it is imperative that they meet regularly as a subgroup of OPC to regain the culture whose function was to provide continued authentic professional development for new members. Such a forum would encourage dialogue which could maintain a collaborative focus on school improvement and empowerment for the continued professional growth of all group members. In addition, secondary administrators should commit themselves to the development of the larger OPC organization in order to secure a supportive culture for all members of this larger group. Grace called the OPC the 'new phoenix on the horizon'. The phoenix arises out of ashes, in this case, the ashes of the old culture of the secondary administrators. This phoenix is arising very slowly and will require some serious nurturing by both elementary and secondary OPC members. Evans reminds us that, although it is a difficult task, it "does not mean that culture cannot change or the leaders cannot shape it, only that the changing and shaping take a very long time" (1996, p. 51). The search for a new combined culture "involves a period - often lengthy - of distress and ambivalence as people try to grasp the full extent of what is being lost and modify their pattern of meaning to incorporate the new....it cannot be hurried, and each person must do it for himself" (Evans, 1996, p. 51). If a

real dialogue about cultural growth does not begin, the isolation of the secondary group members in OPC will continue and a OPC group identity will be more difficult to emerge.

Considering change is a phenomenon of modern organizations, it is also recommended that administrators take responsibility to understand how change has affected them personally. Furthermore, administrators should learn and practise strategies to maintain their emotional and physical health. Csikszentmihalyi, as quoted by Fullen (1993), advises that people, “who learn to control their inner experiences, while contending with the positive and negative forces of change will be able to determine the quality of their lives” (p. 4). Unless it can be managed, stress can severely affect administrators’ work and personal lives, causing ripple effects in the education of young people.

The findings of the study also lead to some recommendations for senior administrators. Roger Plant, as quoted by Fiedler and Chalmer, says that there are “dire and expensive consequences of not paying attention to the ways and means of implementing change. The key factor... has become the way in which the people involved feel about how they have been treated” (1984, p. 117). This study indicates the need, for those individuals implementing fundamental changes in an organization, to understand and acknowledge the culture of the organization. Furthermore, any change or removal of supportive structures should sensitively consider the needs these structures address. Change agents



**need to appreciate personal grief responses which result from a loss of cultural support when implementing contextual change. Senior administrators should be aware of predictable behavioural and emotional signs of resistance to change, such as, “anger, lack of cooperation, lack of effort lack or commitment, unwillingness to attend meetings, cynicism, looking for another jobs and careers outside of education, early retirement” ( Fiedler & Chalmer, 1984, p.118).**

**Fiedler and Chalmer quote studies by Bolan et al. showing that the senior management of organizations that coped most successfully with change had “collegial management styles and had facilitated the development of collaborative ...structures...and ways of working for planning, consultation and decision making”(1984, p. 119). Thus, when critical changes are to be made, senior administrators would be well advised to involve the constituent groups in problem finding and solving before fundamental contractual or past practice changes are implemented. Fiedler and Chalmer (1984) believe that, “the very process of listening actively to the resisting forces will have the effect of reducing them.” (p. 119). Bernstein and Rozen (1992) also offer the following advice for senior bureaucrats:**

**As the skills required to do the job increase and the trained population decreases, [businesses] are beginning to discover that to remain competitive, companies must hold onto their skilled employees.**

**Inspiring loyalty and trust... suddenly has dollars-and-sense value.**

**[Businesses] will be looking for ways to make people really feel part of**

a team. (p. 190)

As well, senior administrators should understand and make efforts to remove causes of reduced job satisfaction over which they have considerable control, for example, the committee selection process. Developing a process which is perceived to be fair by all participants would promote an atmosphere of trust. Such a first step would avert problems that contribute to inefficiency.

Senior administrators should guard against the possibility that their own personal biases may be affecting their choices of individuals to mentor and promote. Bernstein and Rozen (1992) warn:

If one member stands out from the team, don't be so hasty in seeing this person as the most capable member. His or her major skill might be in attracting your attention and pleasing you. You may have to decide whether that is what you want to reward or whether the [organization] requires other skills (p. 193).

Senior administrators should remain mindful of their leadership responsibility to "create an environment in which all subordinates can contribute their full range of talents to the accomplishment of ...goals. He or she works to uncover the hidden creative resources of subordinates" (Sergiovanni and Starratt,1998, p. 19).

It is in the best interest of the organization for Senior administrators, to take some responsibility for emotional health and physical health of employees. All staff should receive training on identifying

stress causes and reactions as well as stress management techniques. This training should be part of a staff development program and should follow an stress audit of administrators. Modeling successful businesses which include in benefit packages, memberships for exercise facilities, and regular paid leaves might also help to alleviate stress.

Although these suggestions might slow down the pace of change, cost more money, and / or require more meetings, the benefits would include the avoidance of anger, frustration, resistance, and increased job satisfaction. Administrators are far more effective in doing the difficult job of managing schools if their thoughts are not otherwise preoccupied with real or perceived injustices. Attention by senior administrators and Boards of Education to issues of job satisfaction might attract elusive potential new administrators, who are evaluating the roles of the principal and vice-principal from the teachers' perspective.

The educational community should evaluate the effects of the changes of the last two years in order to affect some solutions that might ward off the apparent looming shortage of school administrators. Harold (1997) quotes a New Zealand Council of Educational Research report which "sees the solutions in lying with better funding, more support for principals plus a slower rate of change ... greater professional unity... better communication networks"(p. 5). Clearly all of the constituent groups have a vested interest and a critical part in addressing this complex problem.

### Post Script

The nature of qualitative research made me acutely aware of my own inclinations and compelled me to critically examine my role and responsibilities as a participant observer. The validity and integrity of a qualitative study increase when the researcher acknowledges and addresses his or her own biases. Although the responses to the survey and analysis of field notes leave no doubt about the group's feelings about having been removed from O.S.S.T.F., there are two areas where bias could have crept into these results. I conferred with all group members who responded to my interview request. The feelings of the five members who did not respond might have differed from those who did. Two of these are strong OPC supporters so it is likely that they would have shed a more positive light on this organization. Their views however, might be included in the results of the anonymous survey. As a participant observer, my bias cannot be completely discounted, although remarks by other participants were, in all cases, merely an echo of my own. I had to guard constantly, both in recording field notes and in writing this paper, against slipping out of my role as chronicler to joining the whining. It would have been helpful had this group completed a survey on group culture before 1998. The comparison that could have been made with a previous survey would have increased my confidence that the findings are accurate.

I am grateful for the experience of looking so closely at this problem

that my colleagues and I were attempting to deal with. The cathartic journey has helped me deal with my own struggles and grieving.

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## Appendix

## Appendix: Group Culture Questionnaire and Response Sheet

### CHANGES IN GROUP CULTURE

(The statements in the sections below describe group culture as outlined by Patterson, Purkey and Parker in Sergiovanni and Starratt, 1998)

After reading the sections below, select any sections or statements where you feel there have been changes since the Secondary Administrator's Group has been removed from O.S.S.T.F. Use the boxes on the response sheet to comment, provide specific examples of changes and indicate how you feel about the change.

Thank you for your time. XXX000 K. W.

**PURPOSE:** our group:

- communicates a set of purposes that provide a sense of direction and a basis for evaluating group activities?
- values the importance of members understanding the purposes?
- wants decisions to be made that reflect these purposes?

**EMPOWERMENT:** our group:

- values empowering members to make decisions that are sensible given the circumstances they face?
- links empowerment to purpose by requiring that decisions reflect group shared values?
- believes that all group members should have equal access to information and resources?

**DECISION MAKING:** our group:

- believes that decisions should be made as close to the point of implementation as possible?
- value decisions being made by those directly affected by them?
- believes that decisions should be made by those who are most expert, given the circumstances or problem being considered, regardless of hierarchical level ?

**SENSE OF COMMUNITY: our group:**

- values a “we” spirit and feeling of ownership in the group?
- considers everyone as shareholders and stake holders in the group?
- demonstrates commitment to helping and developing group members?

**TRUST: our group:**

- believes that given the opportunity members will want to do what is best for the group?
- has confidence in the ability of members to make wise decisions?

**QUALITY: our group:**

- values high standards and expectations for all members?
- believes in a “can do” attitude in all members?
- values an atmosphere of sharing and encouraging within which members “stretch and grow”?

**RECOGNITION: our group:**

- values recognizing members for taking chances and seeking new and better ideas?
- values recognizing the achievements and accomplishments of group members?

**CARING: our group:**

- values the well-being and personal concerns of all group members?
- takes personal interest in the work concerns and career development of members?

**INTEGRITY: our group:**

- values honesty in word and action?
- adopts a single standard of norms and expectations for all members?
- values consistency?
- demonstrates commitment to highest personal and ethical convictions?

**DIVERSITY: our group:**

- values differences in individual philosophy and personality?
- values differences in operating style?
- links diversity in style and method to common group purposes and values?

# CULTURE CHANGE RESPONSE SHEET

PURPOSE:

EMPOWERMENT:

DECISION MAKING:

SENSE OF COMMUNITY:

TRUST:

QUALITY:

RECOGNITION:

CARING:

INTEGRITY:

DIVERSITY: