

Terms and Conditions of Use of Digitised Theses from Trinity College Library Dublin

Copyright statement

All material supplied by Trinity College Library is protected by copyright (under the Copyright and Related Rights Act, 2000 as amended) and other relevant Intellectual Property Rights. By accessing and using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you acknowledge that all Intellectual Property Rights in any Works supplied are the sole and exclusive property of the copyright and/or other IPR holder. Specific copyright holders may not be explicitly identified. Use of materials from other sources within a thesis should not be construed as a claim over them.

A non-exclusive, non-transferable licence is hereby granted to those using or reproducing, in whole or in part, the material for valid purposes, providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. Where specific permission to use material is required, this is identified and such permission must be sought from the copyright holder or agency cited.

Liability statement

By using a Digitised Thesis, I accept that Trinity College Dublin bears no legal responsibility for the accuracy, legality or comprehensiveness of materials contained within the thesis, and that Trinity College Dublin accepts no liability for indirect, consequential, or incidental, damages or losses arising from use of the thesis for whatever reason. Information located in a thesis may be subject to specific use constraints, details of which may not be explicitly described. It is the responsibility of potential and actual users to be aware of such constraints and to abide by them. By making use of material from a digitised thesis, you accept these copyright and disclaimer provisions. Where it is brought to the attention of Trinity College Library that there may be a breach of copyright or other restraint, it is the policy to withdraw or take down access to a thesis while the issue is being resolved.

Access Agreement

By using a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library you are bound by the following Terms & Conditions. Please read them carefully.

I have read and I understand the following statement: All material supplied via a Digitised Thesis from Trinity College Library is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, and duplication or sale of all or part of any of a thesis is not permitted, except that material may be duplicated by you for your research use or for educational purposes in electronic or print form providing the copyright owners are acknowledged using the normal conventions. You must obtain permission for any other use. Electronic or print copies may not be offered, whether for sale or otherwise to anyone. This copy has been supplied on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

UNIVERSITY OF DUBLIN

TRINITY COLLEGE

THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT: A STUDY OF THE OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT AS VEHICLES FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF TRUSTEES, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS IN A SAMPLE OF VOLUNTARY SECONDARY AND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN IRELAND

by

James Mungovan

A thesis submitted to the University of Dublin in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Ph.D.

March, 2000



I hereby declare that this thesis is entirely my own work and that it has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree in any other university.

James Mungovan

I, James Mungovan, agree that the Library of the University of Dublin, Trinity College, may lend or copy this thesis upon request. This permission covers only single copies made for study purposes, subject to normal conditions of acknowledgement.

Signed: James Transforman. June, 13th, 2000

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful to the nominee board members and the principals who participated in this study. I wish to say "thank you" to each respondent. I am grateful to those who participated in the pilot study and who were generous with their time and advice.

I thank Ms. Ann Coyne-King for her assistance is preparing the study instrument for distribution and Ms. Ann King for her assistance is entering the data from the returned questionnaires into a database.

I thank the Franciscan Brothers, Mountbellew, Co. Galway for their support and encouragement.

A very special word of thanks must go to Dr. Seamus McGuinness, who acted as supervisor for the study. I owe him a deep debt of gratitude for his gentle but challenging guidance, constructive comment, insights, support and advice. I thank him for his interest, generosity of time and effort.

I dedicate this study to the memory of my late mother and father – John and Nora Mungovan.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Ackn	nowledgements	iii
Table	e of Contents	iv
List c	of Tables	viii
List c	of Abbreviations	×ii
Abstract		xiii
CHA	APTER ONE	
INTE	RODUCTION	1
1.1	Origins of the Study	2 5
1.2 1.3	The Purpose of the Study Methodology	9
1.4	Significance of the Study	10
1.5	Related Research	13
1.6	Definition of Terms	14

15

15

CHAPTER TWO

Limitations

Outline of the Study

1.7

1.8

SCHOOL BOARDS – A MACRO-PERSPECTIVE

Introd	luction		20
2.1	Generi	c Structures	22
2.2	Reform	1	25
	2.2.1	Canada	25
	2.2.2	Australia	30
	2.2.3	United Kingdom	35
	2.2.4	The United States	39
	2.2.5	Global Trends	45
2.3	Macro-Issues		50
	2.3.1	Entrepreneurial Governance	50
	2.3.2	Decentralisation	51
	2.3.3	School-Based Management (SBM)	54
	2.3.4	School-Based Boards or Councils	59
2.4	School	-Based Management and Irish White Paper on Education	60
2.5	Conclu	ision	62

CHAPTER THREE

CCUOOL DOADDC

4.4.6

4.4.7

4.4.8

4.4.9

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

4.5

<u>3CH</u>	IOOL BOARDS - A MICKO PERSPECTIVE	00
3.1	Studies	67
	3.1.1 United States – School District Board Studies	67
	3.1.2 United States – School Council Studies	75
	3.1.3 Canada and Australia – School Council Studies	80
	3.1.4 Ireland – Board of Management Studies	85
	3.1.5 United Kingdom – Board of Governor Studies	88
	3.1.6 Board Operating Models	96
3.2	Schools as Organisations	99
3.3	Conclusion	105
CHA	APTER FOUR	
BOA	ARDS OF MANAGEMENT AND BOARD EFFECTIVENESS	112
4.1	The Context	112
4.2	Management Structures	114
4.3	Effectiveness	123
4.4	Issues	129
	4.4.1 Policy or Administration	129
	4.4.2 Information and Decision-Making	137
	4.4.3 Board Power and Accountability	142

Orientation, Responsiveness, Legitimisation, Representation

4.4.4 Board-Principal Relationship4.4.5 Professional/Lay Relationships and Control

Participation

Board Processes

4.4.10 Board Climate and Culture

THE EMPIRICAL STUDY AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Training

174

150

154

158

164

168

169

171

172

5.1	The Objectives of the Study	174
5.2	The Approach Adopted for the Study	176
	5.2.1 The Research Methodology	177
	5.2.2 Instrument	180
	5.2.3 The Development of the Instrument and the Pilot Study	183
	5.2.4 The Administration of the Questionnaire	189
	5.2.4.1 Subjects of the Study	189
5.3	Response and Analysis of the Data	192
	5.3.1 Response	192
	5.3.2 Analysis of the Data	193
5.4	Conclusion	195

CHAPTER SIX

ANA	LYSIS OF DATA: ASPECTS OF THE ROLE OF THE BOARD	196
6.1	Demographic Variables	197
0.1	6.1.2 Length of Service	198
	6.1.3 Experience	200
	6.1.4 Gender	200
6.2	The Understanding of the Role of the Board	205
0.2	6.2.1 Nominee Understanding	200
	6.2.2 Principal Understanding	210
	6.2.3 Summary and Discussion	210
6.3	Policy or Administration	211
0.5	6.3.1 Strategic Policy Thrust	214
	6.3.2 Educational Thrust	224
	6.3.3 Administrative Thrust	233
	6.3.4 Summary and Discussion	235
6.4	Orientation, Representation, and Legitimisation	233
0.4	6.4.1 Summary and Discussion	254
6.5	Responsiveness	260
0.5	6.5.1 Summary and Discussion	267
6.6	Accountability	271
0.0	6.6.1 Summary and Discussion	279
6.7	Conclusion	283
CHA	PTER SEVEN	
RELA	ATIONSHIPS AND PROCESSES	284
7.1	Participation	284
1.1	7.1.1 Forms of Participation	285
	7.1.2 Time	289
	7.1.3 Summary and Discussion	291
7.2	Processes	293
	7.2.1 Agenda	293
	7.2.2 Decision-Making	295
	7.2.3 Information – Open or Restricted	299
	7.2.4 Board Meetings – Climate	305
	7.2.5 Summary and Discussion	310
7.3	Relationships – Professional/Lay	317
	7.3.1 Summary and Discussion	328
7.4	Support and Training	332
	7.4.1 Summary and Conclusions	337
7.5	Perceived Effectiveness Overall	341
7.6	Conclusion	345

CHAPTER EIGHT

REVIEW OF THE STUDY, REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTHER RESEARCH.

8.1	Review	w of the Study	346
8.2		ting the Research Questions	350
	8.2.1	Is the role of the board understood by the board itself,	550
	0.2.1	among the members, and among their nominators?	350
	8.2.2	Do the boards provide leadership through the	550
	0.2.2	development of policy for their schools?	352
	8.2.3	How do board members perceive the orientation of	552
	0.2.5	their boards, understood in terms of operating out of	
		a nominee or delegate style?	355
	8.2.4	Do boards, in the perception of the members,	555
	0.2.4	communicate with, respond to, and involve	
		their constituencies?	357
	8.2.5	Is the board itself accountable, and	551
	0.2.5	does it hold its school accountable?	362
	8.2.6	Are the boards participatory and democratic	502
	0.2.0	in their ethos and activities and do they make	
		decisions in a democratic manner?	365
	8.2.7	Is access to information open or restricted?	368
	8.2.7	Do the professional and lay members on the	508
	0.2.0		
		boards of management function in relationship	370
	8.2.9	that can be characterised as a partnership?	570
	0.2.9	Are board members prepared for their role and	274
0 2	Const	are their on-going training and support needs met?	374
8.3		usions	376
8.4		nmendations for Further Research	383
8.5	Closu	re	386

346

APPENDICES

Appendix 1:	Questionnaire: Nominated Members	388
Appendix 2:	Questionnaire: Principals	395
Appendix 3:	Letters	402
Appendix 4:	Overall Effectiveness: Tables for Item 75/76	408
Bibliography		415

LIST OF TABLES

Table 5.1 Table 5.2	Preliminary response to questionnaires Final response to questionnaires.	192 193
Table 5.3	Sample data table.	194
Table 6.1	Length of Service on Community School Boards.	198
Table 6.2	Length of Service on Voluntary Secondary School Boards	199
Table 6.3	Background Experience – Community School Boards.	201
Table 6.4	Background Experience - Voluntary Secondary School Boards.	201
Table 6.5.	In the nomination of board members, the competencies and expertise of the nominees in areas related to education	
	should be an important consideration.	204
Table 6.6	Response by Gender.	206
Table 6.7	Understanding of the role of the board: Community	208
Table 6.8	Understanding of the role of the board - Voluntary Secondary	209
Table 6.9 Table 6.10	Understanding the role of the board: The view of the Principals. As a board, we tend to approve policies presented to us by the school	210
	administration more than we develop board policies.	216
Table 6.11	The board usually accepts recommendations from principal	
	with little questioning by the members.	217
Table 6.12	The board is more comfortable dealing with routine matters	
	that arise in the school, than in discussing policy matters.	218
Table 6.13	Our board tends to focus more on current concerns than	
	on the future of the school.	219
Table 6.14	I consult the Deed of Trust (community schools) or Articles	
	of Management (secondary schools) at least occasionally.	220
Table 6.15	As a board, we have agreed a set of values according to	
	which we seek to manage the school.	221
Table 6.16	In discussing key issues, it is not unusual for a member to ask	
	about what the school stands for and how that is related to the	
	matter under discussion.	222
Table 6.17	Future plans raised.	224
Table 6.18	School policy development raised.	225
Table 6.19	Staff development issues raised.	226
Table 6.20	Educational change raised.	227
Table 6.21	Curriculum issues raised.	228
Table 6.22	Academic progress raised.	229
Table 6.23	Community education raised.	230
Table 6.24	Staff performance issues raised.	231
Table 6.25	The board is well informed about wider educational issues.	232
Table 6.26	Maintenance issues raised.	233
Table 6.27	Pupil discipline issues.	233
Table 6.28	School Finance Issues Raised.	234
Table 6.29	I believe that board members see themselves primarily as	
	representatives of their nominating group.	242
Table 6.30	On the board, I act more according to my personal	
	understanding of issues and school needs, rather than as a	
	representative of my nominating group.	243

Table 6.31	Board members tend to put the interest of their nominating	243
Table 6.32	groups above the interests of the school	243
Table 0.52	I often feel a conflict of loyalty between my responsibilities	244
Table (22	to those who nominated me, and to the interests of the school.	244
Table 6.33	In reaching decisions, there is a willingness among members	245
T 11 (24	to compromise when interest conflict.	245
Table 6.34	Nominees from particular groups tend to support one another	
	at meetings (e.g. parents support each other, teachers	
	support each other, trustee nominees support each other).	246
Table 6.35	I have a responsibility to account to my nominating group	
	regarding the work of the board.	247
Table 6.36	There is regular formal contact between me and my nominating	
	group (parents or teachers or trustees).	248
Table 6.37	The confidentiality of the board is observed.	249
Table 6.38	The board has on occasion evaded responsibility for an	
	important issue facing the school.	250
Table 6.39	Our board is often unwilling to address difficult school issues.	251
Table 6.40	Before reaching an important decision, the board usually seeks	
	input (reactions, opinions, information0 from persons	
	likely to be affected by the decision.	252
Table 6.41	Important issues raised at meetings are often postponed until	
	further information can be obtained.	253
Table 6.42	Important decisions which, I believe, should be made at	
	board meetings are made outside the meetings.	254
Table 6.43	The board provides a periodic report (e.g. annual) of its	
	activities to the trustees of the school.	261
Table 6.44	We spend time at our meetings discussing the concerns of	
	the wider community served by the school.	262
Table 6.45	There are issues I would like to raise at the board, but I feel	
	that they are "off limits."	263
Table 6.46	Board business reflects more closely the needs of the	
	professional staff of the school than the needs of parents.	264
Table 6.47	The board does not seem able to address many of the issues	
	that concern me as a member.	265
Table 6.48	Some interest groups exercise undue influence on the board.	266
Table 6.49	The powers of the board are too limited to address the needs	
	expressed to it.	267
Table 6.50	The board sees itself as primarily accountable to (a) the trustees	
	of the school, (b) the Department of Education,	
	(c) its nominating group, (d) other	273
Table 6.51	The board provides a periodic report of its activities	
	to the trustees of the school.	274
Table 6.52	The board monitors the implementation of its policies and plans. 276	
Table 6.53	The board reviews the operations of the school periodically.	276
Table 6.54	The board received financial reports regularly.	277
Table 6.55	The board reviews the academic performance of the school.	277
Table 6.56	The extra-curricular areas of the school are reviewed by the board.	278
Table 6.57.	The powers of the board are too limited to address the needs	
	expressed to it.	279
Table 7.1	Forms of Participation	285
	r	

Table 7.2	Generally, all members become involved in	
	board deliberations.	286
Table 7.3	I feel I have an opportunity to express my views at meetings.	287
Table 7.4	From your perspective, with regard to meetings, which	
	of the following groups speak most (a) parents; (b) teachers;	
	(c) trustees; (d) all equally?	288
Table 7.5	I feel that the board takes my views into account in arriving	
	at its decisions.	288
Table 7.6	The board takes sufficient time to conduct its business.	290
Table 7.7	With regard to your board – who sets the agenda for meetings.	294
Table 7.8	I participate actively in board meetings through proposing	
	items for the board agenda.	295
Table 7.9	Board decisions are taken usually through majority	
	vote of the members rather than by consensus.	296
Table 7.10	Most of the decisions are arrived at by agreement rather	
	than by taking a vote.	297
Table 7.11	Board decisions are generally unanimous.	298
Table 7.12	After a decision is made, it is supported by all the members.	298
Table 7.13	There are aspects of the school I would like to know	
	more about as a board member, but I do not feel	
	comfortable enquiring about them. [Some board members	
	appear reticent in enquiring about the school – Principal]	300
Table 7.14	Other board members seem to have information that I lack	
	on key issues relating to the work of the board.	
	[The officers of the board (chairperson and/or secretary)	
	make an effort to ensure that all members have similar	
	information on important issues on the agenda – Principals].	301
Table 7.15	I actively seek out information myself rather than wait	
	for it to be given at the board meeting. [Board members,	
	at least occasionally, seek information about the school	
	outside of board meetings – Principals]	302
Table 7.16	I have sufficient understanding of the technical information	
	needed to manage the school. [Most members have an	
	adequate understanding of the technical information	
	needed to run the school – Principals].	303
Table 7.17	At times, the board has appeared unaware of the impact	
	its decisions will have within the school.	304
Table 7.18	There is regular formal contact between me and my	
	nominating group.	304
Table 7.19	There is an atmosphere of openness and trust at board meetings.	307
Table 7.20	There is a group spirit and a sense of cohesiveness	
	among the members of the board.	308
Table 7.21	Conflict arises often at our meetings.	308
Table 7.22	I rarely disagree openly with other members at board meetings.	309
Table 7.23	Board business reflects more closely the needs of the	
	professional staff of the school than the needs of parents.	318
Table 7.24	There are aspects of the school I would like to know about	
	as a board member, but I do not feel comfortable	
	enquiring about them. Some board members appear	
	reticent in enquiring about the school - Principal]	319
Table 7.25	The professional expertise of teachers is respected by the board.	320

Table 7.26	There is a positive working relationship between the professionals (principal and teachers) and the laity	
	(trustee and parent nominees) on the board.	320
Table 7.27	I feel that I have an opportunity to express my view at meetings.	321
Table 7.28	I feel that the board takes my views into account in arriving	
	at its decisions.	321
Table 7.29	From your perspective, with regard to meetings, which	
	of the following groups speak most: a) parents;	
	b) teachers; c) trustees; d) all equally.	322
Table 7.30	All board members become actively involved in board	
	discussions.	323
Table 7.31	Our board would be prepared to overrule the principal	
	if an issue arose on which on which we had	
	an opposing view to him/her.	324
Table 7.32	There are issues being dealt with now by the school	
	administration alone about which the board	
	should be consulted, at least. [There are	
	issues being dealt with now by the school	
	administration alone which should be dealt	
	with by the board – Principal].	325
Table 7.33	As a new member, I was given an introduction to the	
	work of the board.	333
Table 7.34	The trustees ensure that each new board is briefed	
	on its role and responsibilities.	334
Table 7.35	Most members of the board rely on informal discussions	
	and observation of how things are done to	
	learn about their role and responsibilities.	335
Table 7.36	As a board member, I feel adequately prepared for my role.	336
Table 7.37	Board members are adequately prepared through training	
	for their role.	336
Table 7.38	There is no need for the formal training of board members.	337
Table 7.39	(Voluntary secondary boards) Taking everything into	
	account, I am satisfied that:	341
Table 7.40	(Community boards) Taking everything into account,	
	I am satisfied that:	341
Table 7.41	(Principals) Taking everything into account,	
	I am satisfied that my board:	342

LIST OF APPREVIATIONS

ACS	Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools, representing the managerial interests of community and comprehensive schools.
AMCSS	Association of Managers of Catholic Secondary Schools, a body representing management and principals of Catholic Secondary Schools.
CMCSS	Council of Managers of Catholic Secondary Schools, a body representing all the managerial bodies of Catholic Secondary Schools including religious and diocesan managements.
CMRS	Conference of Major Religious Superiors, a body representing the Roman Catholic religious orders, congregations and institutes.
CORI	Conference of Religious of Ireland, a new title for the CMRS.
JMB	Joint Managerial Body, representing the managerial interests of all secondary schools.
SBM	School-Based Management.
SBDM	School-Based Decision-Making.

ABSTRACT

THE BOARD OF MANAGEMENT: A STUDY OF THE OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF THE BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT AS VEHICLES FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF TRUSTEES, TEACHERS, AND PARENTS IN A SAMPLE OF VOLUNTARY SECONDARY AND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN IRELAND

Boards of management are part of an approach aimed at democratising local school management through the involvement of parents and teachers with the school trustees in the local educational decision-making process. Board management implies the existence of processes that are democratic, and relationships that are collaborative and inclusive. The primary focus in this study was the perceptions of the board members as nominees of the primary stakeholders, and the school principals, on the effectiveness of their boards as instruments of participatory management. The study addressed the literature on school management to determine the critical issues for effective board management from two perspectives. It sought to determine what constituted effective management from the perspective of governments and proponents of local school based management - what was its rationale? It addressed the practice of school boards as it emerged from a range of studies - how far were the objectives being realised? The literature provided a basis for a conceptual synthesis, as well as themes and issues around board governance. These were addressed in the empirical study. The study addressed the following issues - the level of understanding of its role by the board and board members, the ability of the board to provide leadership through the development of policy for the school, its operating style understood in terms of nominee or delegate orientations, the responsiveness of the board to its constituencies, board accountability, the participatory processes of the board especially in relation to decision-making, its access to information, the professional/lay relationship on the board, training and on-going support for board members. The empirical study addressed the experience of practitioners serving as board members and principals on twenty-one voluntary secondary boards and nineteen community boards drawn from voluntary secondary and community schools in Ireland.

Did the boards of management live up to the high ideals set for them? The simple answer is that they did not. The idealised model of the board as an instrument of participatory democracy for the governance of schools, though it may be conceptually sound, was not being realised in the general practice of the boards. The data suggested that the way the boards in the study operated was at variance with the role envisaged for them in the Deed of Trust and the Articles of Management and in the expectations set out in the literature for the democratic management of schools. While the generality of the respondents believed that they, their constituents, and their boards, understood the role of the board, their practice of that role, measured against the criteria for board effectiveness identified in the literature, suggested that their understanding of the role was limited. At the same time, while it did identify inadequacies in the understanding and practice of the role at the level of the board and among board members, it also acknowledged the positive contribution that boards of management were making in their schools. Initial and ongoing training for board members is identified as a priority. The revised role for boards of management set out in the Education Act (Ireland) (1998) provides a framework for the boards to address the need for clarification of their roles and responsibilities, and an opportunity, in its implementation, for a revitalising intervention to restate and to strengthen their role.

James Mungovan

March 2000

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

That education is everybody's business in a democratic society is a central theme in the White Paper on Education, Charting our Future (Department of Education, 1995). The White Paper identified pluralism, equality, partnership, democratisation, quality and accountability as fundamental principles of educational progress. A central thrust of the paper was towards a greater devolution/delegation to a partnership between parents and the State in both the formulation and the provision of education for all sections of the community. It stated, in particular, that every child had entitlement to an education that would help him/her in achieving his or her potential. It recognised the primary duty of the parents and their role in the provision of education for their children. The school was encouraged to reflect the family, the local community, and the State which it served, to provide equality of access and benefit to all it served, and to respect the diversity in the traditions, value systems and beliefs of the society. The State had a responsibility for the economic and social well-being of its citizens in a democratic society. While recognising the rights and responsibilities of all the partners in education - parents, owners of the schools, teachers, the local community and the State - the government set out its intent to promote and support an effective balance between their respective contributions. The White Paper placed a substantial emphasis on the attainment of quality and excellence in teaching standards. Transparency and accountability in the use of funds provided to education and an overall accountability of educational institutions to those served by them - pupils, parents, staff, the wider community and the State - were stressed. All schools in receipt of public funds would be subject to regulations regarding their operations and governance. The White Paper recognised that the quality of school management was a key factor in school effectiveness. The school Board of Management was seen as having a key management role and as central to the reform envisaged in the White Paper.

At the time of their introduction into Irish schools, Boards of Management were seen as vehicles for the educational visions of their sponsors and servants of their schools. They were to be instruments to bring together the educational providers and consumers in the provision and delivery of the curriculum and school programmes in a setting which was meant to reflect the values of the particular school community. The board concept in the context of educational management was prompted by management approaches such as: 1) participation; 2) delegation/devolution of authority; 3) board/committee management (Mungovan, 1994, p.19). Participation invites collaboration and therefore involvement from the primary stakeholders in the school community and a voice in the decision-making processes in the school. Stakeholder participation "implies a formal and active role in education and decision-making, ranging from advisory to deliberative." (Connors and McMorrow, 1990, p. 76). Delegation/devolution refers to the transfer of power from one group within the government or administrative system to another further from the centre of power within that system. Delegation implies a level of local but not ultimate responsibility and control within a broader management framework (Everard and Morris, 1988, pp.48-49), while devolution focuses "responsibility for the governance of schooling at the local school level" (Connors and McMorrow, 1990, p.76). Boards of management entail the existence of processes that are democratic and relationships that are collaborative and inclusive. They are part of an approach aimed at democratising local school management through involvement of key partners in education in the local decision-making process.

The White Paper built on this approach. It accepted that the board structure was a key element of the school management structure. It was the precursor of the Education Act (Ireland) (1998). This Act details the functions and responsibilities of boards of management to a degree not specified previously. It imposes added requirements of accountability on school boards for use of resources, efficiency relating to the execution of their roles, and the functioning of the school. Substantial legal responsibilities in regard to the governance and responsibilities of schools rest with boards of management in the provision of effective schooling for all. What the White Paper envisaged, and what the Act specifies, goes beyond a simple transfer of power to school boards of management, to a change in the organisational design of educational governance at all levels through the involvement of all in improving organisational performance, a strengthening of their roles, and a restatement of the values on which the board structure is based. In the light of this new development of the role of boards, it seems appropriate to address how they are currently functioning in practice, and the degree of influence they can have on school affairs.

1.1 ORIGINS OF THE STUDY

Transforming the vision for Irish education into reality in local contexts through setting local priorities and providing support for their school is the crucial challenge facing school boards of management. According to the White Paper, "the essential function of a Board of Management will be to ensure <u>effective educational management and provision</u> in a school."(p.146). Given their

exalted mandate in a context where systemic and fundamental change is being called for in our educational system, it seems appropriate that the current performance of the school boards be put under scrutiny. Mungovan (1994), in a case study of one community school board of management, examined the role, relationships and processes as they were described in the Community School Deed of Trust. The study concluded that there was a substantial gap between the theory as set out and the practice on the ground. Yet, from the perspective of the board members in the case study, the majority, though not the consensual view was that the particular board was an effective board performing a useful role. Building on the earlier research, this study will continue the theme of the writer's case study of 1994 through a study of board performance and effectiveness in a cross section of Irish schools covering both the community and voluntary secondary sectors. It will examine how board members view and experience their role, the practice on these boards, and how this practice relates to the theory regarding school board operations.

This study was prompted by a growing interest among the public in how education was managed, a reappraisal by parents and communities of their influence on the educational provision. According to Swan (1992, p.iv), in the period between the announcement of the Green Paper Education for a Changing World and its publication in 1992, Irish education "... became the subject of the most intensive debate and self-analysis that has occurred throughout its history." The issue of administrative policies and structures became a particular focus in the discussion. Randles (1992, p. 24) questioned "the right of the state to enshrine many of the proposals on administrative policies and structures in legislation." Almost half of the considered response of Conference of Major Religious Superiors (1993) to the Green Paper dealt with administrative policies and structures. The study was also prompted by a personal interest of the writer in how boards of management were functioning, particularly in the light of their evolving role in Irish educational management. The White Paper on Education, Charting our Future (Department of Education, 1995) pointed to greater decentralisation of responsibilities for the governance of schools, an enhanced role and function for the school board and the school principal in the context of shared responsibility for education. Although there is a growing body of research in the area of school administration, particularly as it applies to administrative processes and roles within schools, there is no substantive study of board operations in second level schools in Ireland, nor any substantive discussion of what constitutes effectiveness on boards of management. Powers are being devolved to these boards in the absence of any large-scale objective analysis of how they are currently performing or their ability to acquit themselves of their current responsibilities. Cohen (1990) and Angus (1995) support the need for such an analysis.

Cohen (1990), writing about school governance in the context of decentralisation in the United States, argues that the devolution of decision-making powers is a response to chronic problems of government, problems of rising operational costs, declining political and customer responsiveness, and public concern with standards. The option of devolution strategies, he states, ensures that schools inherit problems that the centre has not been able to solve. He accepts that "proposals for decentralization and choice have many appealing features. They hold out the promise of better education for students, more influence and independence for parents, simpler and more responsive governance for citizens, and better places for teachers to work." (p.378).

Writing out of the context of Australian education reform experience, Angus (1995, p. 26) comments " ... the reforms might be judged to be successful, even if they are implemented principally at the level of rhetoric so that underneath the new language there is little change in practice." It is conceivable, according to Angus, that in Australian school systems considerable effort could be invested in drafting corporate plans, participating in school councils, and writing reports, thus creating additional tasks for schools to undertake, without any real enhancement of their capacity to improve teaching and learning. The new control system may enable governments to cap their expenditure on education.

Glass (1991, p.29) argues in the context of reform in American education that "boards and board members have seldom been mentioned in the literature." In the White Paper (Department of Education, 1995), there was substantial discussion of boards of management. Yet, there appears to be an implication, which seems also to be reflected in the literature around school effectiveness, that school effectiveness is essentially a factor of the school's internal professional arena. The White Paper stated that effective management and leadership at all levels within the school were essential if the school's goals were to be met. The achievement of school effectiveness depended crucially on the leadership offered by the experienced and skilled principals, supported by an in-school management team.

Smith (1993, p. 81) states that, in the broadest sense, the effectiveness of any management structure "is the extent to which it benefits rather than holds back the organisation it is in charge of. It is how much *difference* its presence makes, given what would otherwise quite cheerfully have happened anyway. It is how much value it adds. The board also operates in relationship to an external environment and as part of a larger educational management structure. Where it stands in that structure, and the expectations vested in it by stakeholders, will impact on its internal operations

relative to its school. The internal and external environments constitute the larger arena of board operations. The board's role and effectiveness relate to both environments and its ability to develop and articulate a coherent role for itself in the service of the school that is already a complex organism. Boards were introduced partly as a mechanism through which parents and teachers could influence what was happening in the schools through their involvement in the management of the schools. Boards have been given a central role in the governance of the schools. A number of questions arise that will be addressed in the study. How has the promise of school board management delivered in the Irish context? How effective are they in involving these interests and providing a practical and effective platform for the input of parents, teachers, and trustees into the ongoing processes of education and educational change and reform? What is the nature of the relationship of the board to the school and how is it mediated? How do boards relate to other elements in the structure? Has the reality lived up to the rhetoric? These questions will be addressed in the study and in the conclusions.

1.2 THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Boards of Management have significant powers derived from their Deeds of Trust and are responsible for their schools. With the school administrations, they are expected to fulfil a leadership role in the governance and administration of the total educational and related programmes in their schools. On the surface, it appears that the boards govern and that the board system of managing the schools is sound and reasonable and operating satisfactorily. Theoretically, the structures appear to be logical and operable. What a board is expected to do is set out in its seed documents. What it actually does and how it operates may be related more to less tangible factors. According to Handy (1980, p. 172), a group (including boards) can be "a most effective device for blocking and obstructing new ideas, or the best way of putting them into practice."

Mungovan (1994) found in his case study that there was a significant gap between what was envisaged for the board and what it was actually doing. Whether or not this study confirms this finding will be discussed in the conclusions of the study. If the findings of that case study were representative of boards in general - and this claim in not being made but will be explored in the study- they would indicate in practice that:

 With increasing professionalisation and bureaucratisation of education, the role being played by the board in developing educational policy is secondary to that played by the professionals – administrators and teachers. An elite group - the professionals alone or influential persons or groups on the board effectively control decision-making on boards.

- 2. Boards tend to be reactive more than proactive in policy development at school level. They appear to legitimise the policy recommendations of the principal by "rubber-stamping" them. The board members, rather than adopting an independent stance, have been socialised and co-opted into accepting the administration's perspective. The role of the principal appears to be the dominant locus of power in the school.
- 3. Boards are unduly concerned with administrative matters to the detriment of their strategic role. In practice, the boards take greater interest in administrative issues over issues of policy. Pragmatism rather than planning would seem to characterise board operations. This may be a factor of circumstances as the board members did indicate that they were interested in policy issues.
- 4. The latitude allowed to the local discretion of boards, though it appears to be broad, appears to some board members to be unduly limited, and contributes to an element of frustration among these members.
- 5. Boards and their members, apart from the teacher nominees, are generally unresponsive to their constituency groups and have little public accountability.
- 6. While boards have an inherent potential to be effective managers of their school, in practice they do not deliver on the egalitarian and democratic values on which they are based.
- 7. Though the introduction of the board of management structure into Irish schools has afforded greater opportunity for the involvement of parents and teachers with the trustees through devolution, participation and collaboration in the governance of the schools, in practice this involvement has not had a significant impact on traditional patterns of power and control within the system.
- 8. The board of management has significant responsibilities and powers relative to the school. For the most part they do not fully appreciate and exercise their powers to govern, rather they legitimise the recommendations of the principal.

9. The school board of management has provided a platform for sharing of decision-making among school trustees, parents and teachers and this is appreciated by the different groups, and is seen as being to the benefit of the school.

Yet, the case study also found that, from the perspective of the majority of the board members, this was an effective board. In their terms, they saw themselves as being effective. They attended meetings, they asked questions, they dealt with the issues that arose. In the terms of one trustee member:

I know the school is doing a good job. I know the principal and staff and their commitment. I know I have the power to intervene should I consider it necessary. I do not consider it necessary to do so at present.

Measured against the objective criteria set for it in the study, the board was not effective in the terms of the criteria. The perception and practice of the role of the board held by the members was at variance with the expected practice. This may be a factor of training or of the received culture of educational management. The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of the board of management to govern the school as perceived by nominated board members and principals. The central question is:

What is the perception of board members as nominees of the primary stakeholders and the school principals on the effectiveness of the board as an instrument of participatory management?

This prompts a series of subsidiary questions around the role and the functions of the board.

- 1. Role: The perceived level of understanding of the role of the board among the boards, board members and their nominating groups as perceived by the board members. Is the role of the board understood by the board itself, among the members, and among their nominators?
- 2. Policy or Administration: The ability of the board to provide leadership through policy for their schools. Do the boards provide leadership through the development of policy for their schools?
- 3. Orientation: The operating style of the board and board members understood in terms of nominee or delegate orientations. How do board members perceive the orientation of their boards, understood in terms of operating out of a nominee or delegate style?
- 4. Responsiveness: The responsiveness of the board to its constituencies. Do boards, in the perception of the members, communicate with, respond to, and involve their constituencies?

- 5. Accountability: The accountability of the board and its willingness to hold its school accountable. Is the board itself accountable, and does it hold its school accountable?
- 6. Participation: The participatory processes of the board especially in relation to decision-making. Are the boards participatory and democratic in their ethos and activities, and do they make decisions in a democratic manner?
- 7. Information: The access to information on the board. Is the access to information open or restricted?
- 8. Relationships: The professional/lay relationship on the board, including the board/principal relationship. Do the professional and lay members on the board function in a relationship that can be characterised as a partnership?
- 9. Training and Support: Training and on-going support reflect the commitment of the board members and those to whom they are responsible for their development as self-reliant and confident partners. Are board members prepared for their role, and are their on-going training and support needs met?
- 10. Overall Effectiveness: Overall, are the board members satisfied, taking everything into account, that their boards are effective managers of their schools?

The focus of interest is on effectiveness in the context of a school board and whether board members – parent, teacher and trustee nominees - influence schools as envisaged in the general policy regarding participation in the management of the schools. Has the management reform, heralded by the introduction of local school-based boards, really happened?

The study will address the literature on school governance to determine the critical issues for effective governance by boards of management, particularly in the context of school-based management. It will seek to determine what constitutes effective management from the perspective of governments and proponents of school based management - what is its rationale, and its structures? It will address the practice of boards as it emerges from a range of studies - how far are the objectives for the structure being realised? The literature will provide a basis for a conceptual synthesis, as well as themes and issues around board governance that will be addressed in the fieldwork.

The fieldwork will address the experience of practitioners serving as board members and principals on forty schools boards drawn from voluntary secondary and community schools in Ireland. It will address their perception of how the boards are operating around a range of issues identified in the course of the review of the literature.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

This study will address issues and the questions raised in the previous section related to board performance and effectiveness through:

- Drawing on the literature on the wider experience of board operations generally in other educational environments and jurisdictions in order to develop a tentative outline of effective school based governance.
- 2. Setting out the intended objectives and procedures for the boards of management in voluntary secondary and community schools.
- Collecting detailed factual information and opinions describing their perceptions of the actual role of the boards from serving board members around what are considered in the general literature to be key board operations.
- 4. Analysing and making comparisons and evaluations between what is proposed for boards and what is happening on boards and between boards in the voluntary and community school sectors. Comparing the outcomes with what is suggested in the literature.
- 5. Drawing conclusions from the study.

In an environment of educational reform, questions relating to the purpose of accepted structures and practices inevitably arise. The board of management was a solution introduced to Irish education in a particular set of circumstances. These circumstances are outlined in chapter four of the study. Whether or not it continues to be an effective solution in current circumstances is an important issue. Basic systems need to be examined to make them more effective lest ineffectual solutions continue to be perpetuated. The findings of the study will contribute to the discussion of boards of management and their operation, and may be used to re-appraise their role and functions. Also, it is anticipated that the results and recommendations of the study can be utilised for possible in-service of new board members, or in the development of an instrument for board of management self-evaluation.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

There is a need to investigate the effectiveness of boards to manage schools. In Ireland, as part of an on-going educational reform agenda, the management of education is undergoing a strong shift away from a form of external, bureaucratic control toward greater school based decision-making and management. There is little formal study on the current operation of boards of management in the context of Irish education. Section 1.5 below identifies the studies that are available. The setting up of boards originally, and the proposals in the White Paper on Education (Department of Education, 1995) for extending their mandate, is related to a more decentralised and community-based education system. Given the centrality currently envisaged for the boards in the schools within the framework of school governance, it is appropriate to examine the role they have evolved for themselves, and their effectiveness in playing that role in schools.

The effectiveness of the board to govern is a key issue within today's educational reform movement. Potentially the board can exercise an enormous influence on school effectiveness. Holt and Murphy (1993 p.175ff.) argue that future school effectiveness will be influenced by how successfully school councils and governing bodies function. They argue that the involvement of governing bodies in schools in England in the past amounted effectively to "tokenism" but in the new context of decentralisation and participatory decision-making "a shift in power and authority is obviously going to occur. No longer can a principal or headteacher be 'lord' of an educational fiefdom; a democratic coalition of interest groups are now responsible for administering and managing a school" (p.177).

Effectiveness is a concern addressed regularly by corporate boards, where it is considered important for productivity and organisational success. Good management creates conditions under which people perform at their best. If an effective board contributes to the effectiveness of a school, what constitutes an effective board and how this effectiveness might be enhanced is a significant issue for school boards and schools.

In the context of the educational reform movement, the concept of effectiveness is central. Related to it are calls for evaluation, fitness for the task, ongoing development and review. There is a need to identify and define critical issues for effective governance that could be useful in evaluating performance at school board of management level. There is a need, as well, to meet the training needs of board members for service in a rapidly changing educational, social and political environment and a society that no longer appears willing to leave responsibility for the education of its children to the schools and the professionals.

- 10 -

There are many challenges facing boards in both their external and internal environments. When boards were proposed for the community schools and the primary schools in Ireland in 1970s, the initial focus was on distributing management powers to local communities through involvement of parents in particular in school decision-making. The teacher unions pressed for teacher representation. (O'Flaherty, 1992, pp. 42-75). The board was seen as a linkage point between the community, especially parents, and the school. There was a limited and relatively undefined accountability to the immediate stakeholders and a strong element of administration in their terms of reference. In the White Paper (Department of Education, 1995) the focus shifted from involvement and administrative efficiency in a hierarchical system and a management framework focused on the Department of Education and Science, to system outputs in the form of better educational practice with accountability to the Department and parents.

A board of management will have a statutory obligation to ensure, through the principal and the teaching staff, that:

- the needs of students, individually and collectively are identified and responded to by the school,
- the curriculum, assessment and general education provisions within the schools are of a high quality and meet the requirements prescribed by the Department of Education,
- procedures are in place through which parents can receive full information on all aspects of their children's educational progress, including access to their children's records (p.147).

The new focus was on creating in the schools a better learning and teaching environment through innovation and growth.

The essential function of a board of management will be to ensure **effective educational management and provision** in a school. A board will provide a management and support structure which will enable the principal and staff to achieve the aims and objectives of the school, on a day-to-day basis. A board will ensure the accountability of the school to parents and to students as well as to ... the Department of Education. A board will carry out these functions within the overall framework determined by the patrons/trustees/owners/governors... and the Department of Education (p. 146).

Boards are expected to be supportive of the school and to hold their schools accountable for their educational provision. From the perspective of the parents, the board of management is a vehicle through which they can influence what is essentially a publicly funded professional service, for which they are the clients. From the perspective of the teachers, it is a vehicle that allows them to contribute their professional expertise to school policy. For the trustees, it is a vehicle through which they can ensure the continuity of the ethos of the school.

The board has internal responsibilities relating to the operation of the school. It is responsible for setting policy for the school in a range of areas determined in the Deed of Trust. On the board there are a number of key relationships - between the nominees of the different stakeholders, and between the board and the school principal, who may or may not be its secretary. The relationships and interdependence of the stakeholders among themselves and with the principal appear to be important considerations. Do the board nominees and the principal have a common understanding of the role of the board, or are there perceptions of the board and its operations in conflict? These are significant questions for board members and principals, as well as for the school and the community they serve and will be addressed in the study.

School boards of management in their leadership function contend with competing forces and constraints in determining the mission and setting goals and policies for their schools - the board/principal relationship and their respective responsibilities, the pressure from teacher unions, teacher empowerment and professionalism, the challenges of change among others. This study will yield some insight into how boards manage these forces and constraints, and into the style of leadership being practised. Members of boards need to have a clear understanding of the mission of the school as well as a realistic appreciation of what is desirable, possible and fair for all concerned.

The environment of education is being transformed in a radical and ongoing way and is prompting a fundamental reassessment of educational policy and management. Though boards are relatively new in Irish schools, in the course of their existence there has been significant change in Irish society. Boards, like any institution, can coast along on their traditions and become isolated islands of activity insulated from their constituencies, and can expend energies and enthusiasm on issues peripheral to their role. The complexities facing school boards of management need to be understood in the light of reality as well in terms of ideals. Attempts to understand them and possibly to improve how they operate is worth the effort. There are many factors that support the need to investigate the effectiveness of local boards to govern schools and that indicate the timeliness and appropriateness of this study. It seems worthwhile to probe the depth and richness of the theory of board management as well as the diversity and plurality of its practice in the Irish context.

1.5 RELATED RESEARCH

There is a very limited literature available dealing directly with the Irish experience of school boards. There is a small body of descriptive and analytical literature. The following limited research studies dealing directly with issues relating to board governance in Irish schools were identified. Mungovan, (1994) completed a case study on the roles, relationships and processes in a community school board. This is the only study related to the operation of boards of management in community schools. The outcomes of the study are outlined in Section 1.2 above. Keohane (1979, p. 105), using a survey questionnaire as her principal instrument, studied primary school management in a sample of twenty primary school boards of management in Dublin city and county. The boards used were "representative of various areas from privileged to deprived and including urban, suburban, town and rural boards." They included boards from "Catholic lay-run, Catholic religious-run, Protestant, and non-denominational schools." She found that the involvement of the boards, and lay board members in particular, was limited principally to issues of finance, fund-raising and maintenance. Parents were not effectively involved, and this led to a lack of interest and support for boards among them. The method of funding the schools, divided between the State and the Church, also limited parental involvement in that the parents were being excluded from the process. Their lack of organisation was a factor in this exclusion. Hanley (1989) investigated the contemporary functioning of primary school boards in Dublin City and County. She focused particularly on the role of parent representatives on these boards. She concluded that the parents, though devoid of power within the structures as operating, commanded "the resource of legitimation, and their potential to withdraw this resource necessitates a consideration of their interests at the executive level."(p.271).

A considerable literature exists around the concept of the school board across the developed English speaking world. Most of the research cited in this study will refer to this literature. While Irish boards can benefit considerably from the experiences of other systems, it is important to keep in mind that none of these educational systems was shaped in the same way as the Irish education system. Each system is influenced by its own historical and environmental factors, and has its own unique influences. The findings of this literature are important, but not necessarily generally

applicable, given that there is not an exact correspondence between school-based boards and councils in other jurisdictions and Irish boards, either in their historical, social or political contexts, or in their responsibilities, structures and operations. The purpose in addressing this literature is to identify and to draw from it what can be applied effectively in the Irish environment bearing in mind the context.

1.6 DEFINITION OF TERMS

<u>Board of Management</u>: Koontz and Weihrich (1988 p. 242) describes a "committee", a "board", a "taskforce", a "commission" as different terms for what is, in essence, the same thing - "a group of people, to whom, as a group, some matter is committed." They (p.258) define a group "as two or more people acting interdependently in a unified manner toward the achievement of common goals." The school board of management is defined as an independent, permanent and formal body, acting according to a mandate set out in its founding deed and associated documents. It fits Carver's (1990 p.2) description of a governing board as it denotes a group that has "authority exceeded only by owners and the state." This authority is "matched by its total accountability for all corporate activity."

The boards of management of the voluntary secondary and community schools are legal entities established to manage the schools in accordance with the structure, and subject to the mandate, set out in their Deeds of Trust and/or Articles of Management. Under the Education Act (1998) their structures, functions and obligations have been revised and given a statutory base. In this study the Board of Management in the Irish context is taken as generally equivalent to the Board of Governors in the English educational system or the School Council in the Scottish system. Individual board members are seen as the equivalent of governors in these systems. Rowntree (1981, p.106) described a governing body as "the group (unpaid) appointed by the Local Education Authority in England and Wales to oversee the conduct and curriculum of its maintained schools The governing body's role is to question, comment, advise and support, in close co-operation with the headteacher. In Scotland a comparative body is a School Council." He says that manager was the "term used prior to the Education Act 1980 for what are now called governors of a primary school in England and Wales." Page and Thomas (1977, p.150) describe governors as "a body of people appointed corporately to manage a secondary school in England ... in the maintained sector" and managers as a "body of people" who manage a U.K. primary school "in much the same way that governors govern a secondary school."(p.212).

Voluntary Secondary Schools are "private institutions and almost all are denominational

recognised by the Department of Education as offering an approved curriculum and as complying with certain other rules of the Department set forth in the *Rules and programme for secondary schools...*" (Coolahan, 1981, p.215).

<u>Community Schools</u> are second-level schools established by the state and funded by it. They operate under a Deed of Trust and Articles of Management with sets out their purpose and their management structures. Their purpose, "in the first instance, is to provide comprehensive second-level educational facilities in one school for all the children in the second-level age range of an area." Among their aspirations is to provide "youth and adult education services in their community, to be centres for community activities when their educational, recreational and leisure facilities can be made available to the wider community and its organisations" (Coolahan, 1981, p. 219)

<u>Effectiveness</u> is a multi-faceted concept. In this context it is understood as the degree to which the values, goals and ideals for the board as a management structure for the local school held by its principal stakeholders are achieved in terms of roles, relationships and processes (Price, 1963, p.363; Guba and Lincoln, 1981; Dulewicz, 1995, p.1). The concept will be analysed in chapter four.

1.7 LIMITATIONS

The study will be limited to and based on a sample of voluntary secondary and community school boards. There is no claim that this study is representative of the generality of such boards. It does not extend to comprehensive schools, vocational schools, or community colleges. It is confined to the board's internal operations and processes, and to the understanding and experience of board members. The data will be collected using self-reporting questionnaires. It will be subject to the limitations of this approach. It will be limited to the perceptions of the nominee board members themselves and the school principals. This data will relate to their perception of the operations of their boards. The literature review and the fieldwork for this study was completed in the period between the publication of the White Paper on Education (Ireland, 1995) and the enactment of the Education Act (Ireland, 1998).

1.8 OUTLINE OF THE STUDY

The study is set out in eight chapters. Chapter One sets out a general introduction to the study.

Global trends and international experiences constitute a backdrop for the developments in national

education systems. As indicated already in Section 1.5 above, there is a very limited literature available dealing directly with the Irish experience of school boards. Educational governance structures in other countries, it is suggested, provide a larger context for understanding school boards of management and their ongoing evolution. Chapters two and three discusses the place of boards in the educational management framework in four major jurisdictions in which educational management reform has been ongoing - the United States, Great Britain, Canada and Australia. These jurisdictions were chosen because their general frameworks of educational governance have many similarities at macro level, though there are also significant differences. While there are differences in the contexts and stages of development of the boards or councils in the different jurisdictions, their educational systems have undergone, or are in the process of undergoing, a management reorganisation based on concepts and values that appear to be similar to those underpinning the debate on governance in the Irish education system. The purpose of these chapters is to review a range of relevant literature that will be used to guide the study. The chapters discuss the role and operations of local school boards/councils in the educational management framework from two complementary perspectives.

Chapter two describes the generic educational structures in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the Unites States. It discusses the reforms that are taking place in these systems and examines the trends in their macro governance structures. It discusses four macro-issues in these reforms – entrepreneurial governance, decentralisation, school-based management, and school councils. It also sets out the structures for Irish Education as presented in the White Paper (1995) and the Education Act (1998). The rhetoric of school board management suggests that parents, teachers, the community to a limited extent, and the trustees should see themselves as "stakeholders" and "partners" in the management of the school. The presumption at macro level is that they will be more actively involved and committed. They will have greater ownership and influence, which in turn will be a motivator for greater effort.

Chapter three addresses the reality of school board/council management. How does the reality reflect the rhetoric? It continues to address the literature to determine what is known about how boards operate in practice. It examines board operations from a micro perspective. It describes a range of studies carried out in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and Ireland relating to local and district school boards, boards of governors, school councils and boards of management. Educational management is a common link between them. The focus is on the operations of boards, the difficulties they face and the key effectiveness issues that emerge as important for them as they seek to fulfil their mandate. It identifies a series of models of board operations found in the literature.

Since boards operate in the context of and in the service of schools, it discusses the nature of the school as an organisation. It identifies a range of core themes from the literature reviewed in Chapters two and three. These themes are discussed in greater detail in chapter four.

Across all the jurisdictions, the board or council is a leadership and management group with responsibility for a limited range of decisions specified in their governing documents or terms of reference. The boards of management in Irish schools fall generally within this broad framework, though their governing documents evolved at a relatively early stage in the movement towards greater local responsibility and control in educational management. Though their brief may not be as broad as that of the boards of governors in the United Kingdom, or broader than most of the site-based governance councils in the United States, Canada, or Australia, they have a mandate to operate in a manner consistent with the broad principles of school-site management that underpin these systems. The international experience helps in developing an understanding of the evolving role of the school boards of management in Irish schools as effective instruments of school management, especially in the context of global trends reflected across very many of the educational systems. It points to critical management issues that affect their operations, trends that may affect their future, and factors for their evaluation as effective instruments of school management.

Chapter Four outlines briefly the context in which boards of management developed in Ireland. It outlines the role and structures of these boards as set out in their Deeds of Trust and their Articles and Instruments of Management. It discusses the concept of organisational effectiveness in general, and relates it to the particular context of the board of management in voluntary secondary and community boards. The discussion on effectiveness examines a variety of approaches to defining organisational effectiveness and decides on a multidimensional definition that recognises a local element in the definition as the appropriate approach for the study. The case for the use of this multiple constituency approach to the definition and measurement of effectiveness in the context of the board of management - an approach that includes the understanding of at least the primary interest groups - is argued. Drawing on the literature set out in chapters two and three, the chapter goes on to discuss a range of concepts and issues relating to the role of the board, and relationships and processes on the board identified in the conclusion to chapter three. Among these are the role the board plays - whether it is primarily a policy-making or administrative instrument, the orientation of board members and the relationships between the different groups and individuals on the boards and with their constituents, the responsiveness of the boards to their constituent groups, board legitimisation, board powers and accountability, board processes, levels of participation and involvement of the members, and their orientation and training as board members.

The focus of the study is on the practical experiences of the respondents around the key issues identified in the course of the previous chapters. Chapter five describes the design and the implementation of the empirical study around these issues. The chapter re-states the objectives of the study and sets out the approach adopted for the study. It describes how the sample of boards used in the study was determined, outlines the construction and the administration of the study instrument, describes the response received, and outlines the approach taken in the analysis of the data.

The data from the empirical study are presented and discussed in chapters six and seven. The data are presented around three main themes – roles, relationships, and processes. Chapter six presents the data about the respondents, and the areas of the study relating primarily to the roles the boards are currently exercising. Along with the data about the respondents, the chapter presents the data and a limited discussion on four areas of the study:

- the understanding of the role of the board at the level of the board itself, the board constituencies, and the board members themselves, as perceived by the respondents, and the thrust of the board operations – whether it is perceived primarily as policy development and oversight or administration;
- the orientation adopted by boards and board members towards the role and operations of their boards as an indicator of the predominant culture on the boards, and the legitimisation of the role of the board;
- the responsiveness of the boards in terms of their willingness to consult and engage with their primary constituencies;
- the accountability role of the board and how it is exercised.

Chapter Seven presents the data on board processes and relationships, including

- forms and processes of participation used by the board members;
- the board's own management processes as indicators of a participatory style of operating and its commitment to democratic values;
- board culture and climate as indicators of the relationships between board members on the board;
- professional/lay relationships between the principal and the board, and the professionals and the laity on the board;

• induction, training and support for board members.

Respondents were invited to indicate their overall levels of satisfaction with their boards relating to the core themes of the study. Their responses are set out in Chapter Seven. There is a degree of overlap between Chapter Six and Chapter Seven.

Chapter eight concludes the study. It presents a summary of the study, and sets out the main conclusions based on the findings under the subsidiary questions set out above in sub-section 1.2 above, concluding with the main question addressed in the study. The chapter closes with suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

SCHOOL BOARDS - A MACRO PERSPECTIVE

INTRODUCTION

Recent school management debate in Ireland has taken place primarily in response to the Green and White Papers on Education, and at the National Education Convention (1993), and the subsequent Roundtable discussions on education structures and school governance at secondary level held in 1994. While a broad consensus on macro-management structures eventually evolved and is reflected in the Education Act (Ireland) (1998), a significant part of the earlier discussions was rooted in positions of self-interest held by the participants, as might be expected in what was a highly political debate. Educational governance structures in other countries may provide a larger context for understanding school boards of management and their ongoing evolution. Global trends and international experiences constitute a backdrop for the developments in national education systems. While global trends are recognised in the Report of the National Convention (National Education Convention Secretariat, 1994) and in Report of the Roundtable Discussions (Coolahan and McGuinness, 1994), an analysis of them does not appear in the reports. That these trends were a considerable influence on the position adopted by the Department of Education, is clear from the White Paper on Education "*Charting our Education Future*" (Department of Education, 1995).

Internationally, the ethos and practice of educational governance, and boards as part of the governance structure, are changing rapidly in the context of shifts in the broader social and political systems. According to Ginsburg et al. (1990, p. 402) "one cannot adequately understand the dynamics in nation-states or localities without taking into consideration developments in the world system". Simmons (1977), as quoted by Ginsburg et al., stated that "educational reform ... is shaped by a complex interaction among local, national and international factors." Wirt and Harman (1986, p.494) claimed that "national qualities operate like a prism, refracting and adapting (global) influences, without blocking all of them." Lewin, Little, and Colclough (1992) examined twenty-nine national education plans in sixteen African, Asian, and Latin American countries for the period 1966 to 1985. They found that the plans uniformly expressed the major role of education in the development process, in labour force development, social equality, and nation building. McNeely and Cha (1994) argued that there appears to be a convergence in education systems worldwide "in accordance with world level educational ideologies, structures, and practices" promulgated by

international organisations such as UNESCO, the World Bank and the OECD. A common thread in the reform process has been the introduction or reform of school boards/councils at local school level and the involvement of parents, teachers, local community and other interests in the school decision-making process. The Irish White Paper on Education (Ireland, 1995) envisaged an expanded role for boards of management in Irish educational governance. This is reflected in the Education Act (Ireland) (1998). In the absence of a significant literature on school boards of management in Ireland, the experience and the debate in other countries may be useful in identifying the core issues and concerns.

This chapter and the succeeding chapter will discuss the role and operations of local school boards/councils in the educational management framework from two complementary perspectives. This chapter will examine the trends in the macro governance structures and the models of management in the educational systems of the United Kingdom and a range of systems in the United States, Canada, and Australia. These countries have been chosen because their general frameworks of educational governance have many similarities at macro level, though there are also significant differences. Their systems have undergone, or are in the process of undergoing, a management reorganisation based on concepts and values that are similar to those that underpin the current debate on governance in the Irish education system. Across the systems there are broadly similar moves to replace what are thought to be overly bureaucratic and professionally dominated structures and processes with ones which are designed to be more consumer-friendly and market-responsive. There is an ongoing and significant redistribution of power and control between central and local government and an involvement of the local community. This is happening in ways that suggest radical changes in the traditional ethos and culture of management in schools and in the carefully constructed balances on school boards of management as they have been set up. Their experience may help in developing an understanding of the evolving role of the school board of management in Irish schools as an effective instrument of school governance, and point to critical governance issues which effect their operations and trends which may effect their future. Osborne and Gaebler (1995, p.2) state that "slowly, quietly, far from the public spotlight, new kinds of public institutions are emerging. They are lean, decentralised, and innovative. They are flexible, adaptable, quick to learn new ways when conditions change. They use competition, customer choice and other nonbureaucratic mechanisms to get things done as creatively and effectively as possible. And they are our future." They may also be the future of educational institutions.

The chapter is set out in five sections. Section One briefly describes the generic educational structures in Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Reform is ongoing in

all these systems. Section Two discusses the reforms that are taking place in these systems. Generally similar trends characterise the reforms and restructuring across the systems. Section Three discusses four macro-thrusts in these reforms - entrepreneurial governance, decentralisation, school-based management, and school councils. The trends identified in this macro view of educational governance were reflected in the White Paper on Education "*Charting our Education Future*" (Department of Education, 1995) issued as a step in the process that led to the Education Act (Ireland) (1998). Section Four sets out the proposed structure for Irish education as presented in these instruments. Section Five concludes the chapter. It delineates a range of characteristics and descriptors that contribute to an understanding of what constitutes an effective board of management and effective board performance.

2.1 GENERIC STRUCTURES

School-based boards or councils, where they exist, function in the particular context of educational systems that have their own structure, history and culture. In drawing on the experience of local school governance in these systems it is helpful to have an understanding of the particular system and the forces for change within it. The educational systems of the countries under discussion have both similar and dissimilar educational structures. In Canada, the United States, and Australia, a single national system of education has not developed, though in all three countries there is an interest at national level, more or less overt, in what is happening in the state, province or territorial unit (Caldwell, 1990, pp. 3-26).

Historically, the greatest similarity is between the United States and Canada. In the United States, education is the responsibility of each state. In Canada there are ten distinct provincial systems, some of which have denominational sub-systems. Each state or province has local school districts, which are responsible for schools in their districts. A professional schools superintendent administers the district. Though the systems differ in organisation, policies and practices, there is a degree of similarity in the way public schools are governed by district boards, to whom powers have been delegated by provincial education departments. Though education remains a provincial responsibility, there is a federal interest. In the United States this has been expressed most recently through the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (United States Government, 1994). In Canada there are moves for collaborative action at the level of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, (CMEC) around four themes which they see as crucial for Canadian education: quality, accountability, accessibility and mobility (CMEC, 1993 and 1995).

Across the United States, state governments are mounting efforts to reform structures and improve education. Cuban (1990) set out what he described as the cyclic nature of these reforms. In the 1960s school reform movements produced a drive for participation and equity in schools. This led to a movement to decentralise authority to govern schools from state to district boards. By the late 1970s, this thrust was reversed as a move towards centralising authority gained support from policy-makers at state level. They believed they could improve schools through legislation. Soon it became clear that state bureaucracies were incapable of producing improvement, and so a "third wave" of reform set out to restructure the school system by moving power back to the school, which was now recognised as the primary unit of change and reform. Participation and equity, centralisation and decentralisation, restructuring through devolution to local governance structures within regional or national frameworks, alternative and experimental approaches to education and its management continue to be part of educational governance in the United States.

In Canada, as in the United States, the circumstances in which boards operate are changing as new legislative frameworks are being implemented. The traditional Canadian model was characterised by strong provincial education ministries and relatively weak district school boards (Wirt, 1986). In the Canadian systems, economic, social and educational forces have changed the operational environment of school government (King, 1994). At the ministerial level of governance in over half the provinces and in the Northwest Territories during 1992 and 1993, there was an increased co-ordination and rationalisation of services and infrastructure justified by a need for increased efficiency (Wentzell, 1994; Paquette, 1993). This process continues. At the level of the school board or district, restructuring initiatives are continuing. At school level, school councils are the preferred option. Paquette (1993) identified excellence and equity as the overarching issues in the process, fuelled by the need to become and remain competitive in a globalised information-age economy.

The school district boards in Canada and the United States acted in a manner similar to the Local Education Authorities in the United Kingdom. In the United Kingdom, the educational governance system has had a strong local character since Parliament in 1870 established a public education system, and made "the first attempt to construct an educational system of a unitary character..." (Musgrave, 1968, p. 43). The system, centred on the Department of Education and Science, and headed by the Secretary of State for Education and Science, operated through Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and (since 1902) a board of governors in each school.

In contrast to United Kingdom, Canada and the United States, the Australian State school systems

were fully centralised and tightly controlled bureaucracies for most of their history. State and Territory Governments and non-government school authorities were responsible for providing educational services. The Federal Government provided supplementary funds in the form of grants, and played a role in achieving co-operation in the national education system, largely through the Australian Education Council. Prior to system reforms, state/territory education departments dealt directly with each school without a formal intermediate tier of authority, though some used regional offices for some administrative purposes (Cameron et. al, 1984). The systems were hierarchically structured, bureaucratically administered and pursued a fairly conservative and straightforward view of schooling (Berkeley, 1991). Like Cuban (1990) in the United States, Angus (1995, p. 6-28) identified three governance cycles in Australian education based on devolutionary principles. He differentiated by the level in the system that was the focus of the reform - federal, state, or local. The Australian Commonwealth Government initiated the first cycle, in 1973, at national level. It was based on the belief that responsibility for decision-making was likely to be most effectively discharged when the decision-makers were also the implementers and would stand to benefit from the decisions. They would also be obliged to justify their decisions at local level. The second cycle of devolution, in his view, was initiated by state governments intent on getting better value for their money and was based on principles of corporate management. The third cycle was based on an industrial settlement between the federal level of government, business and the unions, including teacher unions and educationalists. In relation to Australia, Duignan (1990) identified a similar underlying trend. He argued that devolution, combined with a humanistic view of organisation, based on the belief that collaborative decision-making, was more effective than the more traditional bureaucratic forms of decision-making. This approach was allied in the 1980s and 1990s to economic rationalist ideas, goal setting, and the desire to create more effective schools that would offer a better quality education.

Historically, Canada, the United States and Australia did not have a tradition of school-based governing bodies similar to the boards of governors in the United Kingdom schools, but this aspect of their school governance is changing rapidly. In all the systems as part of the reforms, local school based governance structures are being established. There has been an evolution from larger governance structures administered centrally by Departments of Education to decentralised structures that vests authority and responsibility for specific functions to school based boards or councils. Overall control by a central department remains a feature of the systems (Caldwell, 1990). While the basic infrastructure of all the systems continues to function, the culture of the systems has changed radically, particularly since the early 1970s. In Australia, Canada and the United States at local school level, a tier of governance, generally designated "council" or "committee", has been

developed for many schools with varying terms of reference and roles. In the United Kingdom the school board of governors has been restructured and strengthened. According to Odden (1994, p.1) there are common assumptions underlying moves towards reforms.

2.2 REFORM

Though there are differences in the generic educational management systems, there are common threads in the reform measures being taken and the rationale for them. Guthrie and Pierce (1990) point to similarities in both the reforms adopted and the justification for them in the United States and the United Kingdom. Wirt (1991) concluded that though reform practices coincided in the United States and the United Kingdom, and were rooted in similar concerns, they evolved relatively independently of one another. Concerns similar to those in the United States and the United Kingdom were put forwards as motives for reform in Canada (Brown, 1990; Chinien and Boutin; 1991; Paquette, 1993). Caldwell (1990) and David (1989) point to similarities between the Australian reforms and reforms in other OECD countries. This section will outline the main elements of the reforms in a selection of systems in Canada, the United States, Australia and in the United Kingdom.

2.2.1 CANADA

In the majority of the Canadian provinces new local governance structures for education have or are being put in place. The process of developing these structures continues to be politically and technically challenging. Leithwood and Begley (1986, p. 92) reported "increased centralization of decision-making in most provinces and in many school systems" in Canada, especially in the areas of curriculum and testing. They also noted a trend to school-based planning and participative decision-making. Principals were expected to "give more than token instructional leadership" (p.72). Davis (1989) stated that there had been significant developments in the role of governance in the Canadian school systems across all the provinces since the early 1980s, and particularly in urban areas. Board members were taking a more active interest and role in curriculum policy development, financial issues, and in relationships with the Ministry of Education and local administrators. The public was becoming involved also. The traditional roles of administrators in managing the system were changing. School councils were one outcome of the changing environment. These were being put in place gradually and gaining acceptance as vehicles for parental and community influence on schools.

Educational restructuring and a move towards school-based councils gathered pace in the late 1980s, though since 1972, Quebec schools were required to have school committees composed of parents and the principal as a non-voting member. In 1988, as the result of a call from parents in Quebec for a more effective and direct participation at school level, "orientation committees" with greater powers were permitted but not compulsory. On these committees parents were granted a representation at least equal to the combined number of other representatives. The chairperson, who had a casting vote, was a parent. Chalouh (1992) states that, at first, these committees were not well received by teachers.

In 1988, Alberta formally recognised in legislation the right of parents to make decisions regarding the education of their children and allowed parents, if they wished to establish school councils. The purpose of the councils was to advise the principal and the board on matters relating to their school. In 1995, under Bill 37, all Albertan schools were mandated to put councils in place before February 15, 1996. These councils were intended to provide a structure that would enable parents, teachers, staff, principals, community members, and students to come together for the education of their community's children (Jonson, 1995). They were mandated to consult with and provide advice to principals on planning, school programmes, communications and community relations. They were to ensure that the "programs, priorities and performance of the school meet the expectations of the community" (Odynski, 1995). The councils did not control the school. The school principal and staff continued to be responsible for the implementation of educational programmes and the day to day management of the school. School parents had a majority representation on a school council. In 1995, as a support to school councils, school-based decision-making and professional development, Alberta commenced building consortia of partners interested in working together in the delivery of education (Spectrum, 1995). Though councils have a limited accountability and continue to be primarily advisory, they have a significant role, which is supported by the provincial government. Currently, the councils are under review, and one proposal in that review is that the right of the principal and the teachers to vote at council meetings be removed (Ministry of Learning, 1999).

In 1993 Newfoundland and Labrador followed the example of Alberta in setting up councils. In 1992 the Royal Commission of Enquiry into the delivery of educational services in Newfoundland and Labrador presented its report, entitled *Our Children, Our Future*. This report set the principles of equity, quality, freedom of choice, integration, responsiveness, and accountability, as standards against which the success or failure of educational reform should be measured. The Commission stressed that the system had to evolve from both the individual needs of students, their parents, and

the collective needs of the society expressed in a new partnership which had power to initiate change (Royal Commission, 1992, pp. 205-208, 222). The approach was based on the school as the primary agent of meaningful educational change. To implement this approach, the Commission recommended increased delegation of authority from province to school district boards, from district boards to school councils, and from school councils to parents and the community. Schools were granted autonomy within a framework of provincially established standards and shared accountability, so as to enable and support more local involvement in the education process.

Following a Consultation Paper on school council operations, *Working Together for Educational Excellence*, all schools were required eventually to have legally constituted councils, consisting of between eight and fifteen elected and appointed members. Their purpose was "to develop, encourage and promote policies, practices and activities which (would) enhance the quality of school programs and the levels of student achievement in the school." (School Council Steering Committee Report, June 1995, p.2). Their functions included a role in school planning, accountability and communications subject to district planning, board policies and budgeting processes. As in Alberta, the school principal, who had primary responsibility to establish and ensure the operation of the School Council, retained ultimate responsibility to the board for school operations.

Throughout Nova Scotia, community level school-based advisory boards representing parents, teachers, and other members of the community were set up to advise on educational issues. Their purpose was specifically linked to creating and supporting effective schools, a goal which "...particularly in a time of change, require (d) a team approach, with meaningful involvement from all the partners in the education system." The boards are seen as an effective way to bring members of the team to the table with their individual and collective strengths "so that schools meet the needs of all students, reflect the community they serve and are accountable for results" (Nova Scotia, Department of Education and Culture, 1995, p.3). Though currently their role is advisory, there is the possibility for them to proceed to some form of shared governance. While boards are expected to meet in public at least six times a year, they have flexibility, as in Newfoundland and Labrador, in determining their own operating procedures. The initiative in Nova Scotia, coming after the other provinces, mirrored their descriptions of the main functions for councils. Among these are promoting community involvement in the schools, representing the interests of the school, helping enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the school, and helping to make the school more accountable to the public and the community. Community involvement is seen as a key element in creating a more effective school system.

In Ontario, the Royal Commission for Learning released its final report *For the Love of Learning* in 1994. It set out the primary and shared responsibilities of schools and recommended four fundamental and interrelated "educational engines" - teacher professionalisation and development, community alliances, early childhood education, and information technology - to power the reform.

The Commission recommended that every school should create a school-community council, with staff, parents, students and community representatives, to link school and community better. This council is the key instrument of community involvement set out in the report. It also recommended a Parents' Charter of Rights and Responsibilities, and a Students' Charter of Rights and Responsibilities. It recommended an Office of Learning Assessment and Accountability responsible for province-wide and uniform assessment as a watchdog for system performance, which would report to the Legislature.

In the report the need for a strong school-community alliance was rooted in the needs of a changing society and the needs of children in that society. The following illustrates the thrust of this alliance:

Schools can't raise our children for us. They can't do everything by themselves. They can't cope with all the deficits that kids bring to school and with the turbulent, unpredictable times we live in, and at the same time fulfil their main purpose of graduating students with high levels of intellectual competence...

In our vision, schools must no longer be isolated, self-contained institutions, doing their own thing. Instead, they must become part of a network of many local or regional organisations, all inter-connected, and all dealing with the whole reality of childhood. It seems to us to make sense that schools become the physical centre for this network...

That's why one of our key conclusions is that the entire community must share with its schools the responsibility for raising our children, and for their overall development....

Social agencies, community and religious organisations, local ministry offices, businesses and unions, and community colleges and universities all share the non-academic load that's been thrust on schools. With knowledge exploding before our eyes, it's ridiculous to expect schools to keep up with every kind of expertise without the aid of knowledgeable citizens in the community.

Royal Commission (1995, pp. 20-21)

In 1997, under Bill 160, the Minister for Education and Training effectively revised the role and authority of the school boards by taking complete control of educational funding with a view to achieving equality of resources across the system. The move was challenged in the courts by the school boards, and the Minister won.

There are common themes running through the generality of the reports in Alberta, Nova Scotia,

Ontario, Newfoundland, and Labrador, pointing to a new context for educational governance. The global market and the need for educational systems to respond to its priorities and technologies are central consideration for policy-makers at provincial and national levels. The need to become and to remain competitive in this new environment is a primary rationale for reforming the provincial systems. The belief that there is a strong link between education and economic and social development underpins all the reports. Paquette (1993, p. 6) describes what he terms the dominant "faith." This is " ... to survive economically in the globalised economy, Canadians must become more globalised and productive, and to become competitive in the high-value-added occupations of the information age ... all Canadians will require more and better education and training."

The establishment of school councils as vehicles for community involvement in schools and a strengthening of their role is a key element of the reforms. The purpose of the council is to nurture community responsibility, ownership, and authority within stated parameters, for meeting the educational needs of children. It does not have a formal share, in its present form, in governance or management responsibilities. In most cases, the councils are described as advisory in nature. Communication is a most important role served by them. School principals are given responsibility for facilitating the evolution of councils. The limits of local community involvement through council activities, its place in the overall educational structure in relation to the administrative role of the school principal, and the policy role of the local and district board are generally defined in legislation. The council is subject in the directions it gives, and the priorities and strategies which it adopts, to district planning, board policies and budgeting processes. Within these parameters, councils have been given wide discretion in determining the kind of bodies they wish to be, their roles and their level of involvement in school life. It is a discretion that appears to favour the centre. Within the systems, while the school-based councils represent a certain decentralisation of the structures, there are strong centralising tendencies. In general, the determination of curricula is retained centrally at provincial level and the school district boards continue to have a role in deciding overall budget and policy directions, performance measures and accountability as well as staffing, though their role is also changing.

Coinciding with the emergence of the school councils, there appears to be a reduction in the role of the district boards and an increase in the influence of provincial education departments and ministries. In every province, except Quebec, there are moves to reduce administrative costs by reducing or consolidating school board operations (Wentzell, 1993). According to Wentzell, the government's move to the principle of centralisation - decentralisation would reduce school boards in some provinces, and eliminate them in other provinces. It could lead to boards becoming regional

service providers in the larger provinces. He cited four reasons for this trend: standards, effectiveness, efficiency, and relevancy. These, he suggested, could lead to the establishment of a national curriculum strategy, synchronisation in the provision of curricular services, streamlining, proven cost-effectiveness, improvement in performance, consistency in education provision, and national standards. Wilson (1995), speaking in his capacity as President of the Alberta School Board Association, complained that boards had been under attack for nearly a decade, from the time "public schools were portrayed widely as failed institutions." They were to be made redundant in the new era of efficiency and effectiveness.

In the provinces, the governments have been prime movers of the debate. At local level there has been resistance to reform. Webber (1995, p.1) is a strong critic. Writing about schools in Alberta, he complained that they continued to change on an unprecedented scale, but under an education "business" plan, based more upon conservative "ideological and political" beliefs and an unnecessary preoccupation with fiscal rectitude, rather than educational principles and need. What is happening in Canada supports the general contention that the thrust is towards local governance and the resolution of local problems locally, based on the principle of mutual advantage rather than external assistance, but within strict limits imposed by central authority.

2.2.2 AUSTRALIA

In Australia, in the 1980s, in response to a view that the inherited educational governance systems were too centralised, inflexible, remote and inefficient, a rapid restructuring took place. This corresponded closely to major restructuring movements in OECD countries (Caldwell, 1989, Macpherson, 1989). Different states took different routes. All seven states and territories are involved in implementing at least some school-based management policies. A key element of the restructuring of these systems is a move towards local school governance using a school-based council/board. New South Wales and Victoria are examples.

In 1973 the New South Wales government put forward a proposal to establish school-based boards. These boards were to consist of the school principal, a teacher representative and a majority of parent and community representatives. The boards, which were not mandatory, were to have educational, advisory, and facilities management functions in relation to the school. This, and a further proposal put forward in 1975, failed to materialise mainly in the face of professional opposition (Clinch, 1976, p.14). Arising out of the Scott Report (1989), the Department of School Education proposed as a central component of its School Renewal Programme, that a school council

with majority parent and community membership be formed in each government school by the end of 1994. According to Roe (1993), there were two premises on which school councils were proposed in New South Wales: the desirability of community participation, and the principle of local decision-making. He also identified two significant problems: the reluctance of school staff to endorse the establishment of a council and the reluctance of the local community to be involved in responsible decision-making concerning education through the medium of a council. Currently, there is also a focus on the development of new district structures to provide an improved level of service to school councils and to do so locally (Department of School Education, New South Wales, 1995).

In Victoria the main restructuring initiatives were taken by the Ministers for Education (Creed, 1991, p. 249). The government of Victoria passed the Victorian Education (School Councils Act, 1975), which led in 1976 to the setting up of mandatory school councils with significant, though relatively limited powers. In 1982, a new government set as its objective to devolve greater powers and authority to councils in the secondary schools. Attempts in 1986 to extend the powers of councils through further devolution of powers failed due in part to teacher opposition. The proposal, which generated considerable discussion, suggested "the establishment of new self-governing schools that would operate within a framework of state-wide guidelines and policies for curriculum and resource distribution, and a state-wide system of central employment for teachers, public accountability and support for school councils." (Creed, 1991, p.342). In 1990, there was further reform "driven explicitly by the need to make budget cuts." (Creed, 1991, p. 247).

In 1992, a policy paper entitled *Education: Giving Students a Chance*, issued by the Directorate of School Education, heralded a major re-organisation of education and its management. It had as its central theme the belief that quality outcomes from schools could only be assured when decision-making took place at the local level. Following the paper, a *Schools of the Future* task force was set up to focus on shifting educational decision-making and resource management to the school community. Out of this came the *Schools of the Future* programme. Under the programme the central administration was redefined. Its revised role was to provide a framework of direction and support for schools. The local school council was expanded and enhanced. So too was the leadership role of the individual principal acting as an *ex-officio* council member (Gamage, 1993, p. 138). A School Charter, prepared by the school council with the principal and the school community, was made obligatory. This was to set out the goals and priorities and codes of conduct for the school within the broader state determined framework for education. The principal was expected to lead the development of the Charter and to manage its implementation, while the council monitored it.

situation into account. Teachers were to be appointed locally, and teaching service was to be monitored by the Standards Council of the Teaching Profession. The school councils have control over almost all the resources provided in a Global Budget. Caldwell (1997, p. 203) claimed that the education reform taking place in Victoria was "arguably the most sweeping in any system of education in Australia since the establishment of government school in the late 19th. Century."

Through the councils, there is an attempt to devolve authority to the school community, to encourage participatory decision-making and to promote accountability at school level. To ensure community power, staff representation on the newly mandated school councils is limited. Schools are seen as accountable to the local community and the Minister, and they must provide parents and community with information on school plans, progress and achievements. The devolution of authority to school councils in Victoria appears to be pragmatic but steady.

There were similar reform moves characterised by a strong shift away from external, bureaucratic control toward school based decision-making and management in other Australian systems. Most of the governments, either through legislation or encouragement, as part of an ongoing reform agenda promote the establishment of local school boards/councils. In Western Australia, in 1987, the State Government recommended the devolution of decision-making from a central bureaucracy to the schools. School decision-making groups, with limited functions, were established in 1990. For Tasmania, according to Caldwell (1992), the 1980s was a decade of tranquillity until state financial difficulties led to the Cresap Review of the operations of the Department of Education and the Arts. The purpose of the review was to identify areas where greater efficiencies and cost-effectiveness could be achieved while maintaining the quality of education. In the Northern Territory school councils continued to be optional.

Generally, across the systems, through their school-based decision-making councils, school staff and community representatives are permitted to exercise more autonomy over decisions concerning educational policy and the development of their schools within national frameworks. These frameworks determine significant inputs such as curriculum and resources. School managers and administrators are being made more responsible and accountable to both the education authority and the wider school community for greater efficiency and flexibility in the use of the resources under their management. According to Hatton (1994), Australian educational management was being characterised by two modes of operation originating from the corporate world of private enterprise: devolution of authority and responsibility, and strategic or school development planning. This mirrors what has been taking place in many other democratic nations as their education systems have

shifted toward making the school the major unit for educational decision-making (Caldwell, 1990, David, 1989).

The reforms, the impetus for them as well as the definition of education that underpinned them, have their ardent supporters and ardent critics. The needs of the country and the economy are generally cited as a primary motivator for the reforms. Carter (1994) suggested that the impetus for change was rooted in public pressure being brought on governments to maintain high living standards and improve social conditions with fewer resources. Burke (1995) identifies problems with Australia's competitiveness in the world economy, the perceived need to contain the size of the public sector and the growing emphasis on market/corporate forms of organisation as the motivators that led to a wide range of reforms from 1988 to 1995. Roe (1993) supported the reforms in New South Wales and encouraged compliance with the expectations of the Department of School Education through the development of strategies to cope with the needs of the school and the community.

While there is a stated commitment at official level to broader educational values, there is a varied and critical literature which suggest that the driving values behind the reforms, not just in Australia, are narrower and highly instrumental. According to Carter (1994), education had come to be defined in essentialist and instrumental terms to serve the needs of the labour market. Dawkins (1991) did not approve of what he saw as a tendency towards vocationalism. Along similar lines, Burke (1995b) and Blackmore (1990) argued that economic rationalist and corporate managerialist policies had increasingly dominated the agenda and discourse in contemporary Australian education. They argued that the goal has been national reconstruction and international competitiveness through education. Both were critical of what they saw as a shift from the intrinsic to the instrumental value of education. Blackmore contended that the distinction between training for work and educating for life had virtually disappeared, as the Australian system had become more vocationalised at all levels. Burke claimed that public education had become highly politicised. Harman et al. (1991, p. 306) stated that decentralisation in the Australian context was understood primarily in terms of administration and management reorganisation, leading to leaner and flatter central offices. It was focused on the determination of goals, priorities and frameworks for accountability and the transfer of greater authority and responsibility to schools and school councils/boards to make decisions, especially about how resources were allocated (p.303).

Crump and Walker (1994) are critical of the role of government, and especially what they see as the ideological intervention of the State in education. In their view the state, with the support of the unions, has become too involved in the detail of educational policy and practice. So-called "choice"

and "market reform" have not increased choice or diversity at all. Local empowerment has been at the level of rhetoric. They take the view that the role of government is as provider of resources and regulator of education provision in the interests of equity and justice. They advocate a strong role for the education profession as well as community participation in educational development.

The new balance of power, transfer of authority, and quality of accountability that had been expected, were not being realised according to McPherson (1992). He argued (p. 283) that there was a gross imbalance of powers between "self-management and local government functions" which had left the community and client perspectives marginalised in favour of "professional and political perspectives." In his view, the quality of accountability to clients had reached an all-time low in Australian State systems "that celebrate(d) having self-managing schools...."

Caldwell (1993, p. 167-68) presented a more positive view. In his view, most states and territories were tending towards "leaner but more powerful central functions in terms of the formulation of goals, the setting of priorities and the building of frameworks for accountability, but with a clear shift towards school-site management in terms of operational decision-making, including budgeting and community involvement." Whatever redistribution of power and control between central and local government and schools had occurred, it had not necessarily been carried through into an enriched educational experience or greater classroom support.

Dawkins (1991) argued that there was an inherent contradiction in the reform movement. On the one hand, it was being argued that the new technological changes required an education and training system that would foster initiative, creativity, and responsibility among young people. On the other hand, there was an apparent preoccupation in the reform movements with skills and testing instruments. Fitz et al. (1995) argued that though there was a significant transformation in the governance of education in Australia, what went on in schools had not changed to the degree anticipated by those who advocated change through market forces. Dawkins and Fitz et al. suggest that there has been little real change in the organisation and pedagogical aspects of the classroom, teacher professionalism and the education offered by schools. In their view, there has been convergence rather than innovation and diversity.

Looking across Australia, there is a continuum in the process towards decentralisation. Though all states or territories have taken steps towards decentralisation, not all have decentralised their systems to the same extent or followed similar routes. In some states the process has been gradual from a limited to a greater devolution of responsibility, either to a region and then to a school, or directly

to a school council through legislation or by way of recommendation. Most of the states or territories are in the process of setting up school-based management systems in which school councils have a central role against the background of a lively debate. Most now require, or are encouraging, school councils or boards with responsibilities in the areas of policy, budgets and school programmes. According to Caldwell (1992, p. 7), "hierarchical forms of decision-making are quickly disappearing, with principals now expected to consult and reach consensus with a wide range of individuals and groups. There is continuous change and the school which attempts to respond to everything is quickly overwhelmed." The Australian experience mirrors the rapid and ongoing nature of the international reform movement.

2.2.3 UNITED KINGDOM

In the United Kingdom, the roots of local school management date back to the Education Act of 1902, when governing bodies for each school were first mandated. The education system, as operating under the 1944 Education Act, appeared to be loosely knit with a variety in the levels of lay involvement and participation in governance processes. Ranson (1985) and Shipman (1984) argue that though the system gave the appearance of being devolved and as encouraging participation, it was in fact strongly centralist. Ranson suggested that the Act gave very significant powers to central government. Shipman maintained that despite claims for partnership, for freedom for LEAs, and for teacher autonomy, the legal position supported central control. Lawn and Ozga (1986), while accepting that in theory the system was centralist, suggested that crises in the system "allowed teachers to extend their workplace autonomy, in the same way as it allowed LEAs to claim partnership status, as the education system expanded despite financial constraint and teacher shortage." (p. 236). While being *de jure* a centralist system, *de facto* there were decentralising tendencies in it, which appeared to favour particular elites - the LEAs and the professionals. By default the system had become relatively decentralised. Circumstances had allowed the practice to overstep its legal framework.

A body of legislation in the period since 1980 in particular has considerably increased the responsibilities of school governors. The Education Act of 1980 allowed limited rights of representation to parents and teachers on the governing bodies of their schools. In 1984 the Green Paper on "*Parental Influence at School: A New Framework for School Governance in England and Wales*" (United Kingdom, 1984) based on the Taylor Report of 1977. The Green Paper advocated greater community participation in school governance. In 1986, the Education (No.2) Act revised the composition of governing bodies of schools to include greater parental presence, and

extended their powers over the curriculum and conduct of the school along the lines proposed in the Green Paper. In conjunction with the 1988 Education Reform Act, it changed the locus of school decision-making. The 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) in United Kingdom, the 1989 Education Reform (Northern Ireland) Order, and the 1989 Self-Governing of Schools (Scotland) Act, imposed a new framework on education throughout the United Kingdom. Mac Lure (1990) argued that the Act represented the outcomes of at least a decade of reappraisal and revision. Through it, the governance system was radically changed and the relationships and power structure redefined (McLure, 1988, Packwood, 1988, Deem and Brehony, 1990).

The 1988 Education Reform Act addressed three major themes - school autonomy, using market forces to drive educational reform, and the nation's interest in a quality second level schooling for all its citizens, within a framework of three types of reform - school-based management, school choice and school accountability. The school-based management initiative, which was an integral part of the structural change brought about by the Act, introduced formula funding and delegated financial management and staffing to boards of governors. The control of the LEAs over the resources of schools was diminished. Their representation on boards of governors was reduced. Parental rights to a choice of schooling for their children was recognised through the introduction of open enrolment in all LEA schools and through giving schools an "opt out" clause. This clause allowed schools to become "grant maintained." Under this arrangement, these school got direct financial support from central government. LEA powers were reduced in favour of school boards of governors, and parents in particular, or centralised in the Secretary of State. A Parent's Charter was introduced in 1991 (DES, 1991). Under the 1993 Education Act schools were required to consider annually whether they wished to become grant maintained.

The main elements of the school system in the United Kingdom were dramatically rearranged by these reforms. While the school was given control over the deployment of its resources, it was also given a centrally determined curriculum and its "processes" and "outputs" were now to be prescribed by performance indicators. Competition, choice, and other market mechanisms of control with a focus on quality outcomes were preferred over bureaucratic control mechanisms. The degree of autonomy enjoyed by professionals in the system was reduced in favour of community and parental interests in particular. The education consumers were brought inside the structure and given specific responsibilities for which they were to be accountable. The overall responsibility for the conduct of the school was placed under the direction of the governors among whom the education consumers were now the majority, while the overall responsibility for education continued to rest with the Department for Education and Science.

While control was devolved to local boards of governors, at the same time there was a centralisation of control over the curriculum, and educational accountability through prescription and national testing. The governors were to ensure that the national curriculum in core subjects was implemented. While there was scope for some local adaptation, the curriculum package provided in the school was to remain within the terms of national curriculum. National testing of pupils at the ages of 7,11,14,16 was introduced. On the one hand, the system was being decentralised, while on the other hand, there was a strong centralised control being exercised over it.

The reasons put forward for the reforms in the United Kingdom are similar to those stated for the reforms in Canada, Australia and the United States. There was dissatisfaction with the outcomes of schooling, a need to improve economic productivity and to link the economy and the school's role, a need to involve parents and communities more effectively (David, 1989; Malen, Ogawa and Kranz, 1990; Guthrie and Pierce, 1990). As in Canada and Australia, there is a strongly stated alternative view of the rationale for the reforms in the United Kingdom. Schools were being led into a trap. Aldrich (1994, p.5) states that underpinning the transformation that took place in education in the United Kingdom was a government belief that "the brave new world which it envisaged, the world of small businesses, of enterprise, of competition, of individuality, was being hindered by members of the educational establishment." So the thrust of the new legislation introduced by Kenneth Baker in 1988 "was to weaken the power of the providers, and to increase that of the consumers ... an approach... consistent with the general tenor of Thatcherite reform... In education, as in other areas of social policy, there was a move towards controlled competitiveness." In line with open-market strategies, power and control was taken from teachers and LEAs and placed with parents and employers. Ball (1993, p. 77) argued that school self-management resulted in the state being left in the "enviable position of having power without responsibility" and school were left with the responsibility but without the resources. Hartley (1994, p. 139) stated:

The surface impression given is that devolved school management is all about local control and the quest for quality. At root, however, it is a new mode of regulation, a new discourse, whereby government retains strategic control of funding, curriculum and assessment, whilst it devolves to headteachers (not school boards, who will merely be consulted) the tactics for implementing that strategy.

The way the reform package is presented varies according to the audience being addressed. The rhetoric used to sell the package as participatory, inclusive and economical makes it attractive to parents, teachers, school administrators and others in their own particular terms.

Blackmore (1993), Morrison (1991) and Holt (1993) believed that the educational reforms had a strong political motivation. Blackmore believed that the education system in the United Kingdom

was already relatively decentralised under the LEAs in a close partnership with teacher unions and parents. She contended that the shift to self-governing schools was not only informed by economical considerations but also was part of a political and ideological strategy to bypass and bring about the destruction of the largely Labour controlled LEAs. Its purpose was to break the alleged tripartite partnership between the teacher unions, parents and LEAs and to break up the comprehensive system of schooling that had emerged since the 1960s. Morrison (1991, p. 1-3) made a related point. She suggested that the Minister for Scottish Education, Mr. Michael Forsyth, promoted the introduction of school boards in Scotland, in an attempt to undermine professional dominance of the system. She argued that it was also a way of containing the perceived power of teachers. It was introduced in the aftermath of the longest and most acrimonious period of industrial action ever mounted by the Scottish teaching profession that had brought the government to the brink of a general election. Holt (1993) argued that the dominant characteristic of educational policy-making in both the United States and the United Kingdom was hyper-politicisation, motivated by conservative political considerations.

Maden (1989), writing from her perspective as the Chief Education Officer of a LEA, defended the role of local authorities in the macro-educational framework. In her view, schools needed a larger framework than just the individual school; otherwise they could become introspective, measuring themselves against their own goals. They needed a wider perspective, and being part of a larger system could provide this. The larger system also had the capacity to combine support and encouragement with assessment and monitoring. Hargreaves (1990) recognised the need of schools for LEA type services while tending to be voluntary consumers of LEA provided services. He suggested local consortia among schools to share services in Consortium Education Authorities, which could become LEAs by another name. Maden (1990, p.18) rebutted Hargreaves and argued for the wider remit of the LEAs. She concluded that without them larger policy and strategic decisions would be even more centralised than they already were. In Canada and Australia there is evidence that consortia along the lines suggested by Hargreaves are developing.

In the United Kingdom, as in the other jurisdictions, school accountability for educational results, educational choice and curriculum reform are dominant themes in the effort to bring about long-term, comprehensive changes in the educational system. Education is seen as having an increasing value and worth to the community and the economic system. Society, through enhanced parental and community involvement in local governance structures, has been given a measure of control of the system. In the governance of education, new relationships are being defined in the service of a particular vision of a system of education for a complex post-industrial society. Raab et al. (1997,

p. 141) challenge the view that the new relationships can be defined as partnerships. They contend that the "old notion of partnership – however mythical it may have been – has been superseded by new and often antagonistic relationships among the participants." Similar, but not identical, developments are part of the educational reform movement in the United States.

2.2.4 THE UNITED STATES

In the history of educational reform in the United States, the report A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence, 1983), and its call for educational change has a special place as a major stimulus. The report prompted widespread criticism of America's schools. It predicted the decline of the United States as an international leader in industry if it did not improve public education. There was an almost countrywide state response. Another report from the National Center on Education in the Economy, To Secure Our Future (1989) took a similar view to A Nation at Risk. It proposed a restructuring of education that would emphasise performance but keep costs at a minimum. It called for new approaches to the organisation, management and staffing of schools to meet the needs of an information based rather than an industrial ("smokestack") economy (p.14). The United States Department of Labour in the report of the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS, 1991) identified specific skills which the educational sector should be providing to enable students to respond to the needs of the newly evolving workplace. It called for schools to be transformed into high-performance organisations in their own right, emulating the high performance that characterised the most competitive companies, in all aspects of their operations. A dominant view in these reports was that the education provided to students would effect the nation's economic viability and its political status.

Concern about the schools did not come just from the business sector. Demographic and cultural changes were occurring in the society. The Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB, 1992) identified the extent of child poverty, the diversity and the growth of minority populations, scientific advances, and a crisis of values, as particularly noteworthy. Glasser (1992) contended that the basic human needs of children were not being met in America's schools. He complained of an absence of quality in the education being provided, which generated a mediocre response from students. Parents and students should be identified as customers and, as such, they would be better able to determine the quality of education provided in the schools. Glasser's views reflected a claim by Mitchell (1990) that the realities of life facing families were being evaded in schools. Rather than being a reinforcer of a child's growth and development, the family was sending emotionally insecure children to school. Family based problems - personal and financial - limited

parental participation by parents in the school due to lack of time and pressures of work, discipline problems in the home, were spilling over into the school. In many respects, the education system under siege reflected the crises in society at large, and schools were perceived as not responding. Tyack (1990 p.174) commented that "reform periods in education are typically times when concerns about the state of the society or economy spill over into demands that schools set things straight." There seemed to be a strong underlying belief that formal education could repair any fault in the economic and social fabric of society, so educational reform became a priority.

The first response to the dissatisfaction with the system being expressed from different sectors of the society was a reform that focused on the value of "quality." Many states passed education-reform acts setting out processes of teacher certification and evaluation, increased monitoring of schools, tighter regulations, and centralised management structures (Doyle and Hartle, 1985; Berry and Ginsberg, 1990). According to Murphy (1993 p.vii), there was a switch in strategies in the middle to late 1980s. This switch was from the "centralising movement" to approaches designed to empower parents and teachers, and to transfer control to local communities. These new approaches emphasised "choice and voice for parents, empowerment for teachers, school-based management for both, and, to a lesser extent, changes in the learning-teaching process." The thrust of this new wave of reform was "choice." Witte (1990) claimed that choice was to be realised using market mechanisms, or by decentralising decisions to the local school site. The choice movement echoed a similar movement in Canada and the United Kingdom. The market was seen as giving an impetus to the improvement of educational productivity and to satisfying parental dissatisfaction with schooling.

By 1990 there was a further policy effort aimed at providing choice, described by Wohlstetter and McCurdy (1991) as local empowerment. They described it in terms of administrative decentralisation and site-based management. It meant putting a local structure in place that empowered parents, teachers and principals in each school to set their own priorities, to allocate their own budget according to these priorities, to shape their curriculum, and to hire and dismiss personnel. Decision-making was localised, while responsibility was directed not just upwards but outwards as well towards the community served by the school. According to Wohlstetter and McCurdy, these structures were allowed in fourteen states, though not uniformly across all the states. The role of the federal government was minimal in these reforms, which were initiated in each state. Murphy (1993, p. vii) states that the reforms in the United States paralleled, in many respects, "educational reforms that are unfolding in nations throughout the industrialized world."

There were conflicting views about these reforms. Cuban (1990, p.9) was sceptical about the reforms of the 1980s. He believed that they rarely went beyond getting adopted as policy and seldom become embedded "in the deepest structures of schooling ... in the school's use of time and space, teaching practice, and classroom routines ..." even when reforms sought these alterations as their goal. Bell (1993, p.593) believed that the period from 1983 and 1993 saw little improvement in schools due to the "cataclysmic change in the quality of students' life outside of school and the steady erosion of parental support and community interest in education (that) made it impossible for schools to succeed."

Masell and Fuhrman (1994) took a more positive view about the reform movement. Using California, Florida, Georgia and Minnesota as case studies, they examined the state of education reform and policy-making over the ten years 1983-1993. They found that an evolutionary shift had occurred in policy areas and strategy (p. v). Among the major changes they found over that period were:

- a major shift from "input-focused" education to a focus on results and systemic reform;
- 2. a rise in the power of local educators and leaders;
- 3. a closer look at the capacity of states and local governments to implement reform;
- 4. development of curricular frameworks and assessment instruments.

Cawelti (1994) reported on a nation-wide study that dealt with one aspect of the reform movementhigh school restructuring. This study showed a trend towards more participative management and leadership at school level. Almost half of the respondents in the study reported that there was shared school governance in their schools (p.19). The study showed that the overall rate of change was very variable across the schools, and that the traditional structures still had a strong hold. It appeared to be easier to develop than to implement policy.

Cooley and Thompson (1990) concluded that one consequence of the education reform movement was that state agencies had acquired an increased control of local school boards. State mandated programmes, often in response pressures from business or industrial leaders, had taken away control from many school boards.

While it is impossible to generalise about as broad and as varied a set of systems as are found in the United States, there seems to be two competing thrusts, very similar to those at work the United Kingdom, in its policies on centralised curriculum and testing. Initially, there was an increasing

centralisation of control of the education system as part of a response to the deficiencies identified in the system. In this thrust, reform was led from the top-down through setting uniform strategies and standards, providing resources, calling accountability. A current example of this approach is the *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*, a federal law, which was signed on March 31st. 1994 by President Clinton. The Act set out a broadly sketched framework of key strategies for achieving its goals covering teaching and learning, standards and assessments. Among them are quality, equality, improvement and accountability for learning; the use of technology; governance, accountability and good management in schools; parental and community support and involvement; promoting grassroots efforts; strategies for helping school dropouts; the creation of co-ordinated education and training systems; structures and timelines for each element together with ongoing performance evaluation and a process for building a broad partnership.

The second thrust puts an increased emphasis on school autonomy and the devolution of responsibilities to the local level. Grassroots initiatives are promoted within a publicly defined framework of standards and accountability, decentralised control, and an entrepreneurial management style. Powers are devolved to school councils. Schools are held accountable and assessed by public officials, who do not themselves run the schools. The principle of mutual accountability between the school and society is a central and controversial issue. The growth of "charter schools" is a further and more radical example of this trend. These schools may be privately owned or public schools that opt out from their local education agency and are run with the aid of a grant from public funds as licensed or contracted education providers. They may be the recipients of vouchers provided to students to allow them to attend the school of their choice. The "Charter Schools" are broadly similar to the "Grant Maintained" schools in the United Kingdom. Finn and Ravitch (1995, p.2) stated that by summer 1995, nineteen states had enacted "charter" school laws, though not always with great enthusiasm. The number of such schools continues to grow, tuition vouchers are generating debate, and interest in home schooling as an option is rising.

Chicago and Kentucky were examples, among many others, of profound transformation of traditional patterns of educational governance. These systems, through the nineties, pointed to a trend towards a radical rearrangement of public education which was becoming more common in the United States (Cawelti, 1994, pp. 52-68). Elmore (1993, p.104) described the Chicago initiative as "one of the most far-reaching and fundamental experiments in school reform at the moment." It was the result of a state law "initiated by a city-wide political movement formed around a broad-based constituency interested in seizing control of the schools from the existing board and administration and turning the attention of the school system to the concerns of parents and community education activists."

According to Hannon (1990, p. 527), the Chicago public school system was highly centralised, known for its bureaucracy and in crisis. There were cries for reform from parent activists, community leaders, local business. The Illinois state legislature responded with the Chicago School Reform Law, 1988.

Through the Reform Law, Chicago introduced comprehensive decentralisation legislation which required each school to be governed primarily by an elected council of eleven members - six representative of the school's parents, two teachers, two representatives of the community served by the school, one student who was non-voting, and the school principal. The chairperson of each council was a parent. All council members received training. Each council had authority to appoint a principal on a four year performance contract, disperse its budget according to its own priorities, prepare long-term plans for school improvement, and recommend new teacher appointments. The school improvement plan and curriculum plans were to be drafted by a professional advisory committee. This was made up of teachers elected by the school professionals, and the principal, and was approved by the council. According to Bacchus and Marchiafava (1991), the Reform Law was based on the premise that schools should be under the firm direction of parents and that authority should be vested in the school community, rather than in a central administration.

The local school council operated within a framework of sub-district and district councils and an overall city board, and a monitoring structure for school performance. The city board negotiated on behalf of the system, adopted the budget for the entire system, and adopted an education development plan for the city. A central office administered the system, provided information to the schools, and controlled finances. The system was relatively complex and had a multiplicity of levels and relationships. It was the subject of loud debate, turmoil, some success and substantial revision. In June, 1995, the mayor replaced the public school system's superintendent and the board of education with a new five person board appointed by the mayor, and a management team to manage the system for a term of four years.

Kentucky is another example of the search for effective ways to govern and manage schools. In 1989 the court declared the state system of school governance and finance unconstitutional. The court specified that "the system be focused on outcomes, student performance, and not just dollar inputs" (Massell and Fuhrman, 1993, p. 26). In 1989, the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) revamped the entire education structure and delegated significant responsibilities to teachers, parents and principals at school level. At school level, councils composed of three teachers, two parents and the principal were delegated decision-making "on textbooks, school-scheduling, extra-curricular

activities and how the school's money is spent, among many other things" (Walsh, 1996, Kentucky Dept. of Education). Councils could be larger provided the proportion of parents, teachers and administrator remain the same. In addition to the council there were committees that supported its work, such as curriculum, finance, extra-curricular activities, on which parents and teachers were invited to be active. School council meetings are public and open to all parents and the general public.

The reforms sought to make parents and teachers full partners in the work to improve schools and education for all children. The reforms were based firmly on the belief that all children can learn, that high standards produce high achievements, that results matters, that school resources must be equitable, and that school was the best place to make decisions about what happened in the school. By July, 1st., 1996 all schools (with some specified exceptions) were to have school-based decision-making councils (Edwards, and Kentucky Department of Education, 1996). By July, 1998, over 85% of the schools had councils (KERA, 1998). Under the Education Act schools were accountable for student performance. There was statewide assessments administered by the Kentucky Office of Assessment and Accountability. According to the Office of Assessment and Accountability (1995), teachers, schools and districts are responsible for educating children to the highest possible standards. The statewide assessment scores of those children may add up to rewards for outstanding educators, and assistance for those experiencing difficulties.

As was the case in Chicago, the place of the school council in the education governance structure of the state and its relationship to school boards and other agencies is a concern in the system. School boards were now required to share some of their traditional rights and decision-making powers with other groups. As in Chicago tensions developed between the different agencies regarding their roles and responsibilities (Massell and Furhman, 1993, p. 32). The councils, initially seen as relatively autonomous, were eventually required to act consistent with local school board policy. In 1995 a set of guidelines was issued to provide guidance and to help clarify the relationship of school-based decision-making. There were issues about council operations, and the relationships between councils and other school-related agencies, especially parent groups, which needed clarification. School support groups were told that they had to abide by legitimate council policies relative to the organisation and operation of the school (Edwards, and Kentucky Department of Education, 1996).

The thrust of the reform of educational governance in the United States was away from a closed system of school politics. Social, economic and political factors were leading to a broader base for

educational governance with more influence for those outside the educational community. The definitions of schools and schooling were broadening as greater community influence was being facilitated through governance structures. The development of policy at state level, and its implementation determined at school level allowed for state determined and state maintained standards and local discretion in how these standards were reached. There are many solutions to common problems of which Chicago and Kentucky are but two examples. Terms like charter, voucher, alternative teacher licensing, options and reinventing schools, are common, as is the belief that the current system of schooling is incapable of changing as rapidly as the society needs to meet its needs.

As in other jurisdictions, there are strong protagonists supporting and opposing the reforms. Drucker (1989), for example, argues that a nation's economic competitiveness depended on its schools' ability to prepare citizens who were knowledgeable and self-disciplined, who have strong analytical, interpersonal and communications skills and who were committed to life long learning. Giroux (1989) was critical of the reform movement because, in his view, it was driven by selfish, instrumental and marketplace values and ignored social justice and public responsibility. Here, as in the other jurisdictions, both sides in the argument agreed that schools were important. Where they seemed to differ was in their understanding of what would keep society vibrant - the power of knowledge and skills, or the power of politics and the web of social inter-relationships.

2.2.5 GLOBAL TRENDS

The ethos and practice of educational governance, and boards as part of the governance structure, is changing rapidly in the context of enormous shifts in the broader social and political systems. Boyd (1992) noted that economic concerns had replaced the earlier focus on equity in educational provision, and these concerns underpinned the dominant current model within which education policy was being discussed in the English-speaking world. This trend was evident on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as in Australia and New Zealand (Boyd, 1992). The purposes of the education systems were being redefined within a framework determined by the needs of the national and global economies. At national levels, education was being viewed to a large extent in terms of human capital development and as a strategy for improving national economic competitiveness. The OECD by the early 1980s had come to realise that major changes were happening in the labour markets of industrialised economies (OECD, 1989). Its analyses suggested that higher educational skills would be needed in the evolving employment growth areas. Governments, if their educational programmes merely helped young people to get jobs -often dead-end jobs- rather than equipping them to meet the

need of the future work force, were doing a disservice to them. The rationale stated in the OECD (1993, p. 9) report is echoed across many jurisdictions:

Only a well-trained and highly adaptable labour force can provide the capacity to adjust to structural change and seize new employment opportunities created by technological progress. Achieving this will in many cases entail a re-examination, perhaps radical, of the economic treatment of human resources and education.

In fairness to the OECD, it does not advocate viewing education solely in economic terms, or educational policy as an instrument of economic policy and short-term objectives. Not just the thrust of education was being reconceptualised.

There seems to be deliberative action at national levels to support and nurture local governance based on the belief that "when communities are empowered to solve their own problems, they function better than communities that depend on services provided by outsiders" (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992, p. 51). The reform and restructuring of the educational systems described have particular global features which support this approach, though not all these features are present, or to a similar extent, in any one system. Where they are present, they are not uniformly applied but are modified in different national contexts as they are translated into structures and regulations to meet the needs of local circumstances. Among the trends underpinning current reforms are the following:

There appears to be wide agreement that education is in crisis and that reform is needed. Reform in response to new circumstances and priorities rather than maintenance of the *status quo* is an underlying thrust in all the jurisdictions. A pervasive strand in this thrust focuses on decentralisation through the redistribution of power within the governance system, through a school-based management structure which allows significant decision-making authority to those who work with and are closest to students - parents, teachers, community. The decentralisation of authority is being done in different ways.

There is a linkage between values and the purpose of education and the educational structures being developed. Across the systems there appears to be a convergence in the aims put forward and the means to achieve these aims. This convergence is most obvious in the common terminology used across the systems such as accountability, participation, school-based management, choice, equity and is reflected in the similarities between initiatives taken by different governments in response to similar sectoral promptings e.g. business.

School councils or local school boards in the context of school-based management, with varying degrees of authority and formats, are becoming the vehicle through which large bureaucratic structures are decentralised, and to which responsibilities are being devolved or delegated, and through which the stakeholders are involved. These councils highlight the matrix between the home, the school, the economy and the social wellbeing of the individual within the society. The school-based council or board is a symbol of this matrix, and stands at a crossroads among the competing rights of the different interests. In all the systems, there are ongoing efforts to determine the authority and functions of these school-based councils.

In the systems surveyed, there is a general strengthening of the role of parents. A stronger role for parents has been built into legislation in many jurisdictions. The trend is towards greater parent participation and gradually appreciating parent power. The involvement of parental and community interests in governance is moving from a consultative, advisory base to a shared power relationship based on rights and responsibilities for education with the professionals and other stakeholders. While there appears to a general acceptance of this trend, there seems to be some uncertainty in how it can be operated and managed effectively.

The nature of the relationship between the school and its community is coming to be viewed more than ever in contractual terms with schools being service providers. The need for greater responsiveness to community needs, the involvement of the community and good communications with the community is put forward as a motivating force for reform in all the systems. A free-market approach to education is promoted as a way of giving choice to parents, and encouraging schools to be accountable, distinctive and innovative. The free-market analogy is being used to indicate how schools should be managed.

A move towards community ownership and involvement in the governance of education is a central thrust across the systems, though not uniformly so. The focus is on what can better meet the multiple needs of children and families. There is a particular concern with those living at the margins of society. The expertise and experience of professionals is valued as a key resource, not the control, in efforts to meet needs.

The effective management of resources would seem to be central to overall management effectiveness. Schools are being made self-managing. They are given greater discretion in

prioritising budgeted expenditures and resources in the interest of meeting the individual needs of pupils. Choice and competition are present in several systems.

At the same time, there is a revision and a tightening of the role of the state in education, a direct linkage in educational policy at macro level to the economy, a rigorous emphasis on value for money, and the opening of education to market forces and values. There is a redefinition of the roles of educational administrators and teachers as a direct result of the delegation or devolution of management. Central governments are taking a more interventionist stance in relation to education.

Overall policies and outcome goals for the education system are being set at provincial or state level, while responsibility for the implementation of these policies is being decentralised to the school. The determination of the ends of education is reserved, while the means are devolved. Therefore, the determination of goals, curriculum and assessment are core areas generally reserved to central determination, though not always to the same extent or in the same way e.g. Kentucky in the United States, or Victoria in Australia. Accountability for the goals is upward to central level and outwards to market forces, especially through giving parents a choice.

The changing policy ethos is profoundly influencing the role and the agenda of the intermediate management structures - school boards both at district and school levels - where they exist. Increased state, province or central control and increased devolution to school-site management has changed their role. School choice programmes, charter and grant maintained schools, privatisation or contracting out and deregulation of schools, are being promoted as alternatives to the traditional school systems.

In all jurisdictions there are strong dissenting voices arguing against the reforms and who are highly suspicious of the motivations stated for them. In the view of the dissenters, the reforms are interrelated with social, cultural and political agendas, and these agendas appear to have a stronger role in motivating and shaping the reforms than anything happening within education does. They argue that the pressure for change comes from the state and a variety of interest groups and from such forces as collective bargaining, social movements, and resource constraints.

A frequent criticism in the literature is that education has often become a slave to "modern"

technology and national economic objectives, serving the interests of capital more than enabling young people to lead productive, creative, and critically aware lives according to their own understanding. In this view, the management systems being developed support a utilitarian model in contrast to more humanistic conceptions of education.

While the proposed reforms across the systems have much in common, there is no common solution. There are some common principles and these pervade every aspect of schooling of which school management is one part. In asking for a reconceptualisation of education, a reconceptualisation of educational governance is also occurring, based on the nature of teaching and learning, educational relationships and school-community relationships.

Though each jurisdiction has its own reasons for the reforms being put in place, there are common themes in the justifications put forward. Structural, financial, technological, social, strategic and political forces are at the base of global changes that influence education and its governance. Global factors have an extensive influence on the parameters that establish educational policy in any of the jurisdictions.

The expectation underlying these trends appears to be that when governments enable local communities to own and address their own problems, they empower these communities. They enable it to rediscover its strengths as a "community", and to harness them positively. Among these strengths are a better understanding of local problems and issues, the possibility of greater flexibility and creativity in addressing these, greater commitment to the resolution of problems locally rather than looking to a central agency. It is an approach based on shared values, a sense of local control, and the hope of improved efficiency. Mellaville and Blank (1991) argue that the ultimate goal of local governance is a high-quality, comprehensive and seamless web of services characterised by easy access to a wide range of support services. These should be adaptable to meet the changing needs of children and families, and focus on the family and its empowerment within a productive and collaborative atmosphere that emphasises improved outcomes for children and families. In this view, the tackling of community issues and problems is seen as the responsibility of all sectors. In the context of a more holistic and integrated concept of society, education is a service of the community to itself. There is a recognition that the problems of education in a community are not isolated from other problems, so there is a need for cross community involvement in education. This vision is strongly stated in the Ontario Report For Love of Learning (Ontario, 1994) which, as its rationale for school councils, proposed an integrated approach to the care and nurturing of children involving families, community agencies, groups and institutions as partners with the school as broker (p. 42The following section will discuss a range of key thrusts in these global trends - an entrepreneurial approach to government, decentralisation and school-based management.

2.3 MACRO-ISSUES

2.3.1 ENTREPRENEURIAL GOVERNANCE

The educational systems, their schools and their processes in all the jurisdictions are a combination of history, traditions, pragmatic responses to changing circumstances, and environment. No two systems are the same or have ambitions to be the same. The schools and their communities are part of the larger society and influenced by the governmental values and processes of that society. Osborne and Gaebler (1995, p. 19) in their discussion of entrepreneurial government state that

Most entrepreneurial governments promote competition between service providers. They empower citizens by pushing control out of the bureaucracy into the community. They measure the performance of their agencies, focusing not on inputs but on outcomes. They are driven by their goals - their missions - not by their rules and regulations. They redefine their clients as customers and offer them choices - between schools, between training programs, between housing options. They prevent problems before they emerge, rather than simply offering services afterward. They put their energies into earning money, not simply spending it. They decentralise authority, embracing participatory management. They prefer market mechanisms to bureaucratic mechanisms. And they focus not simply on providing public services, but on catalysing all sectors - public, private and voluntary - into action to solve their community's problems. (p.19).

What is happening in educational governance seems to reflect a reconceptualisation of government along the entrepreneurial lines described by Osborne and Gaebler. This entails a critical rethinking of traditional power structures and allegiances. Two separate and divergent trends in school governance have emerged - centralised control of resources and curriculum and delegation or devolution of decisions within a policy framework, often within national goals, determined at regional or national level, to the local school. Offsetting the trend towards centralisation is an apparently paradoxical decentralising trend of increasing the operational authority of the local school management. According to Caldwell and Spinks (1992, p. 4), while the predominant thrust is towards "...specific and consistent decentralization to the school level of authority to make decisions related to the allocation of resources," it is happening within a centralised framework of control which places an emphasis on community responsibility for education in the community. Busher and

Saran (1992) identified a number of paradoxes within the devolutionary mode: the consultative involvement of staff versus the strengthening of management; increased powers devolved to senior management versus staff participation and influence on decisions; a weakened union movement at national level though strengthened locally; market pressures on schools through competition versus interschool co-operation in the construction of curricular and development plans; competition between schools in the context of government prescription on important elements of their operations. Caldwell (1990, p.23) recognised the tension between the two thrusts. It was not necessarily a negative tension. He believes "that a relatively high level of self-management can be achieved at the same time that a more powerful and focused role is adopted at the system level" (p.23).

2.3.2 DECENTRALISATION

The concept of decentralisation has become a key organisational principle for much of the education reform movement, but it does not appear to have a precise definition that is generally accepted, particularly in its relationship to centralisation. Etzioni (1971, p. 64) stated that "... a truly decentralized participatory system will tend to be highly responsive to the needs of the members in each participatory locality, but will tend to neglect inter-local, inter-regional and national needs, both of the allocative (e.g., social justice) type and those which are best shared collectively (e.g. priming of the economy)." Rosenholtz (1985) argued that it was neither practical nor feasible to develop a fully centralised or decentralised system. Providing too much school-based freedom might result in confusion and inconsistency, and too little freedom. It might lead to inefficiency and a feeling of being restrained. In his view, there was a productive tension between the two thrusts, which for optimum effect needed to be carefully managed. It might result in the centralisation of some aspects in order to get successful decentralisation in others. McGinn and Street (1986) argue that the centralisation/decentralisation concept is not an either/or division. The question is one of "the distribution of power among various groups in the society. A highly participatory society - one in which all citizens actually do participate - is likely to require a competent and powerful state that actively and continuously seeks to redistribute power among groups and individuals in the society." (p.489). They describe centralisation and decentralisation as a single phenomenon, "a dyadic relationship in which the elements have no meaning taken alone", a dyad that represents "the forces that characterise relationships and tensions between groups in society," (p.472). Fullan (1993, p.37) stated that while "centralization errs on the side of over control, decentralization errs towards chaos." Fullan (1994) concluded that the whole matter of the relative roles and relationships of centralized and decentralized strategies for educational reform was a morass, badly in need of conceptual and strategic clarification. In his view, neither bottom-up nor top-down strategies for educational reform

work. What seems to emerge from the discussion is that a more sophisticated blend of the two is needed.

Rondinelli (1990), as quoted by Hanson (1995, p. 102), describes two forms of decentralisation - political and administrative. Political decentralisation transfers political power for decision-making to local level. Administrative decentralisation transfers responsibility for planning, and the local management of the resources drawn from central government and its agencies. He constructs a continuum to describe the range of possible decentralisation. On the one end is "decontentation", which involves the redistribution of tasks but not authority. Next is "participation", which entails local input in decisions but still there is no concrete authority. Then comes "delegation", which redistributes genuine decision-making powers, but within firm policy guidelines. Finally, "devolution", which denotes total school independence (Hanson, 1990, p. 525). Hanson's approach stresses the power relations involved in educational decision-making. The current trend in education would appear to be towards administrative decentralisation in the form of delegation and decontentation. Hanson (1990, p. 529) states that the Chicago reform effected a genuine transfer of power to the newly created local school councils.

Calling for, or legislating for community participation and actually achieving it are different things. The key to decentralisation lies in the level at which substantial decisions are made. Hanson (1995, p. 116) makes the point that if participation is to effectively involve and retain the involvement of local communities, these communities must have significant authority. Striking an optimum balance in the relationship between the different levels in the system is neither easy to achieve or to maintain. It may be more difficult at local level to facilitate shareholder participation where personal relationships and long-standing attitudes and practices have interacted in complex ways. In Hanson's comparison of the United States and the Spanish experience, he lists the following questions that, in his view, still remain unresolved regarding the redistribution of authority to local school councils:

- 1. What issues are discussed at meetings curriculum, budget, the office copier?
- 2. Who dominates voting and agenda setting parents, teachers, administrators, or school board?
- 3. Does decision-making take place through consensus or are votes split along regular group lines?
- 4. How are resources, programmes, personnel, and the level of community involvement affected?
- 5. Is the quality of education improving as a result?

(Hanson, 1990, p. 5370).

Decentralisation, through inviting participation in school governance structures, creates an

expectancy that those without power or control over school governance processes will have the means to make schools more responsive to their needs and thus be able to exercise power. Participation suggests that individuals or groups are in some way able to directly influence and be involved with decision-making. The issue of power is central - how and to what extent is power and responsibility transferred from one group within a government or administrative system to another group further from the centre of the system, in a way that gives the group more influence on policies which directly affect them? Who is empowered through the participatory processes? Decentralisation and participatory decision-making processes may allow individuals or groups to exert control or particular interests to resist change just as much as the older structures did. Sarason (1992) argued that past reforms have failed because they did not change the power relationships in schools. In a decentralised system, there are also power relationships, and the possibility that any element or faction in these relationships may wish to remake policy in their own favour.

The exercise of power in the system to facilitate, negate or resist change is noted by many scholars (Marshall and Scribner, 1991; Noblit et al., 1991). Marshall and Scribner (1991, pp. 347 - 355) describe the micro-politics of education. All school participants have power to veto, or to resist changes imposed from above, though they may have no power to make changes themselves. If school administrators or teachers disagree with a change, they are unlikely to change their practices. Noblit et al. (1991, p. 394) concluded that "teachers can use micropolitics to resist reform and to heighten their control of their workplaces." (p.394). In a structure in which many interests are represented, each interest can resist change, but no interest can force their views on the others, so creating a situation that makes change impossible, and that supports the status quo.

Decentralisation has its limitations. Of itself it rarely, if ever, improves student achievement and decentralisation strategies, if poorly designed, produce little or no effect (Malen, Ogawa and Kranz, 1990; Wohlstetter and Odden, 1992). Wohlstetter (1995) concluded that school-based management is not effective where it is adopted as an end in itself, or where principals work from their own agendas. There needs to be a wholehearted commitment to change and broadening the decision-making base and a willingness to disperse power.

Successful decentralisation and governance reform is dependent on positive power relationships between the different levels in the system as well as at local school level. Many factors contribute to this, among them a shared vision of what education can and should be and the delegation of real power and authority to schools (Wohlstetter and Odden, 1992); professional development and rewards for accomplishments either individually or on a group basis (Odden and Wohlstetter, 1995); good communications (Lieberman and Miller, 1990); building trust and discarding of destructive and

cynical myths different groups in the process hold towards each other (Kriesbery, 1992; Liftig, 1990). In a decentralised governance environment, the development of good working relationships and positive attitudes towards collaboration in the pursuit of shared vision for education, and the responsibility of each level of group for implementing the vision, may be as important as the extent of the powers devolved or delegated. The question of the distribution of powers has to be addressed and the ethos in which these powers are exercised needs to be developed. Altering prevailing power relationships in school governance is a pre-requisite in school-based management (Cohen, 1990, Sarason, 1990).

School-based management is the most prominent current manifestation of the trend towards decentralisation and locally driven reform. This trend is variously described in the literature as restructuring, site-based management, school-based management, participatory decision-making, school-based autonomy, school empowerment, shared governance, administrative decentralisation, devolution, among others (Conley and Bacharach, 1990; Cuban, 1990; Arterbury and Hord, 1991). Concepts such as teacher empowerment, facilitative leadership, parent and community involvement, student inclusion appear regularly in the literature around it. Faced with an array of definitions, Lewis (1989, p. 173-174) makes the point that "the name is not as important as the shifts in authority that are taking place ... No matter what the term ... the school takes centre stage in today's education reform scene." Whatever the label the concept of school-based management is now viewed by many, but not all, as a viable alternative to a more centralised system.

2.3.3 SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT (SBM)

The broad aim of school-based management is greater productivity and effectiveness. The strategy for achieving these are clear goals determined at central level, implemented at school level, with accountability for their achievement rendered upwards to central level, and outwards to clients, with in-built rewards or sanctions, the ultimate being parental choice of school. SBM, in these terms, is expected to change the traditional structures of authority and bring about a new relationship between parents, teachers, administration and students. While the literature generally refers to school-based management in the context of whole school involvement, the interest here is in its application at the level of a site-based board or council with devolved and *ex-officio* responsibilities for the management of the school. School boards and councils are an element of the school-based management concept, but not the whole of it.

Though there appears to be a general agreement in describing SBM as a general concept, there are

many definitions. Malen, Ogawa, and Kranz (1989, p.1) state that "school-based management can be viewed conceptually as a formal alteration of governance structures, as a form of decentralisation that identifies the individual school as the primary unit of improvement and relies on the redistribution of decision-making authority as the primary means through which improvements might be stimulated and sustained." The following year, based on a review of several SBM reports, evaluations, descriptions and initiatives, they described it as a "generic term for diverse activities" and "an ambiguous concept that defies definition" (Malen, Ogawa and Kranz, 1990, p.298-299). Prickett et al. (1992, p. 52) also found a variety of opinions and different perceptions across a range of educational professionals. David (1995) argued that site-based management had almost as many variants as there were places claiming to be "site-based."

According to Herman (1991, p. vi) the central concept in school based management is devolution of authority, allowing expanded local control and influence, and allowing schools greater responsibility for their own affairs. He describes school-based management as (italics in original) "*a structure and a process* that allows greater building level decision-making related to some or all of the areas of instruction, personnel, budget, policy and other matters pertinent to local school building governance; and it is a process that *involves* a variety of *stakeholders* in decisions related to the local individual school."

While there is a variety in the definitions and the practice of SBM, there is a general consensus that, if practised, it changes the ethos and processes of educational governance. It decentralises the exercise of authority, recognises that the school is the primary unit of educational change, and devolves decision-making powers to the local school level. The involvement of parents as well as teacher empowerment and accountability are key ingredients and essential to the implementation of SBM.

The motivations and rationales for the move towards school-based management are many. Elmore (1993, p. 34) described the impetus which gave rise to the site based management reform as a reaction to the "centralised school bureaucracies." These, he claimed, had led to schools becoming

... mired in rules and cut off from their clients - students, parents and community members. Ambitious, if not radical, reforms are required to rectify this situation. Central bureaucracy must be substantially reduced: schools must be given more autonomy and more responsibility on such matters as personnel, budget, and curriculum; new governance structures must be designed that hold schools accountable to their clients, rather than to their bureaucratic superiors. Reformers yearn for a simpler, more direct link between the schools and 'the people. SBM addresses the contention that the decision-making processes of many educational systems are isolated and bureaucratic, that decision-makers do not understand the real needs of the individual schools and the community, and that the needs of students are best understood and addressed locally. It is proposed as a strategy for increasing achievement and shifting the balance of authority among the different levels in the educational governance structure (Hanson, 1990; Smith and Day, 1991; Hill and Bonan 1991). It provides an opportunity to secure a greater range of participation by individuals at the local school level in the governance of their school ((Rosentholz, 1987; Clune and White, 1988; Carlson, 1989; Watt, 1989). Summers and Johnson (1995) cited a sense of ownership and involvement as expected outcomes of SBM. With management devolved to school level, schools would be more responsible for their own performance. Teachers, administrators, parents and communities would be motivated to work together in developing a school culture that encouraged creative and innovative solutions in addressing problems. SBM would allow individuals who were closest to the problems or the decision-making situations to be the ones to make the decision e.g. teachers on curriculum, principals on school problems. Brown (1990) categorised the benefits of school-based management under three heads - increased flexibility, improved accountability, and enhanced productivity. As proposed, SBM has the capacity to change the whole ethos of governance and its processes.

At the centre of SBM is the concept of participatory decision-making at the level of the school, with student achievement as its primary justification. Fullan (1991, p. 201), after reviewing evidence on site-based management, stated that devolved decision-making to schools may have altered governance procedures but it did not affect the teaching-learning core of schools. Hallinger, Murphy and Hausman (1991, p. 11) found that principals and staff, while in favour of devolved decisionmaking, did not link "governance structures and the teaching-learning process." Weiss (1992, p.2) found along similar lines that "schools with school-based decision-making did not pay more attention to issues of curriculum than traditionally managed schools, and pedagogical issues and student concerns were low on the list for both sets of schools." Wirt (1991, p.40) asserts that the "cold truth about school-based management ... is that there is no convincing evidence that these UK and US reforms have played the children game successfully...." Elmore (1993, p. 34) found that that in many cases of SBM reform there was only a shifting of power which "had little discernible effect on the efficiency, accountability, or effectiveness of public schools." The politics of structural reform had "increasingly become a politics about the authority of various institutional arrangements, disconnected from any serious treatment of whether these arrangements can be expected to have any impact on what students learn in school" (p.39). There is an underlying implication in the rationale proposed for SBM that participatory decision-making and student achievements are linked. In practice, the literature states that this link has not been forged.

By definition power structures and relationships in schools under SBM ought to be different than in schools in a more hierarchical system. Malen, Ogawa and Kranz (1990) reported that participants in SBM tended not to challenge well-established norms and roles, felt uncertain or sceptical of their actual authority, and lacked the resources to make substantive change. They identified three typical patterns of school-based control in decision-making in an internal school-management team, which may have application at the board/council level. In some schools the management team was responsible for peripheral issues only or simply advisors endorsing the decisions already made by the principal. In others the principal exerted overt or informal control. Then there were schools where the management team had real decision-making authority, while the traditional roles of principal as policy-maker and teacher as instructor were maintained. Malen et al. (1990) supported the distribution of authority at the school site so that the authority did not reside with the principal alone.

Wohlstetter and Odden (1992), in a review of the research, state that the rhetoric of SBM has often been much more than the substance. They found that SBM "is everywhere and anywhere, comes in a variety of forms, is created without clear goals or real accountability, and exists in a state/district policy context that often gives mixed signals to schools." (p.2). They found that "nothing real had been decentralized ...(and) evidence to date suggests few consistent patterns in the types of decisions given to school under school-based management." Little substantive decision-making authority had been delegated. Authority relationships had not changed. In practice, there was seldom any real involvement in such core issues as curriculum and instruction, and little decision-making authority, while peripheral issues got undue attention. Where there was substantial involvement, the main concerns in proceedings were teacher morale and satisfaction, rather than student learning. Many involved in the process felt frustrated as their lacked any meaningful involvement (pp. 2-6).

The intended purpose of school-based management is not simply to reorganise responsibilities, but to make changes in traditional structures of authority and decision-making, with new relationships between the different elements and stakeholders in the governance structures - trustees, teachers, parents, community and the school administration. If these changes occur, inevitably there will be redistribution of authority, power and influence as a result. This distribution, and its related accountability, is a crucial factor in SBM. So it would seem axiomatic that all participate meaningfully - trustees in their particular role as guardians of the ethos of the school, parents as

primary educators and consumers, teacher and administrators as the main implementers - in shaping the direction of the school. The literature cited suggests that there are many issues that are unresolved.

The literature also suggests reasons why SBM has had limited success. It points to inadequate resources, limited authority, resistance to change, and a need for training and support for those involved. Lortie and Kemmerer (1987) stated that organisational change based on the formal distribution of power and authority had become ineffective because it failed to address the socio-economic constraints on decision-making. Without the resources to carry through decisions, there was little point in having decision-making processes and decisions that cannot be implemented. When participants did try to break out of past patterns, according to Wohlstetter and Odden (1992, p. 532), "the degree of real authority given to the site is often remarkably limited." For Rossmillar and Holcomb (1993), a major obstacle to reform appeared to be a lack of the knowledge and skills needed to achieve lasting change in the accepted and customary ways that the work of the school was carried out. According to David (1994), there appeared to be a reluctance to address policy issues. There was strong evidence to suggest that an undue amount of time was being spent on issues of discipline, facilities and extracurricular activities, issues people felt strongly about and knew how to deal with and which linked parents and teachers.

From the perspective of governance, the challenge is to maximise the possibility for all to participate fully and appropriately in an informed and sensitive manner in the decision-making process. There are policy issues around lines of authority that emerge particularly in decision-making, and around responsibility and accountability for the consequences of these decisions. Among these are issues relating to:

- 1. The location of power in the system where are real decisions taken, what power is transferred, and who ultimately is responsible for the decisions taken?
- 2. The role of the local governance body is it clear about what is expected of it, is the role a substantial one and are the other elements in the structure equally clear about their own and each other's role and committed to respecting the boundaries?
- 3. The implementation process what is expected of what structures?
- 4. The training, development and resource needs is there an understanding of these, and the need for skills and expertise and time for good decisions and a commitment to an appropriate response to these needs?
- 5. The particular school environment, including ethos and traditions is there a willingness to address issues of ethos and inherited ways of doing things in a positive way?

6. The commitment and motivational levels of members - is there a willingness to address policy issues particularly in relation to curriculum and instruction?

Simple altruism is not sufficient to overcome the barriers to successful local management. According to Prasch (1990) and the National School Boards Association (1994), SBM is a complex undertaking with many barriers that may prevent its successful implementation. A key conclusion from the literature is that school-based management goes beyond the creation of local school-based management structures with power to make a limited range of decisions. It needs to be carefully planned within the overall educational structure and used to achieve carefully defined educational objectives focused on teaching and learning.

In terms of this study, the question arises: has the board based system of governance in Irish schools, part of the rationale for which was to involve parents and teachers as stakeholders in the educational system with the trustees, effectively changed the traditional bureaucratic model of schools to a more open and participatory model, in which they have a worthwhile role? As a corollary - how willing have the stakeholders been to participate, even if the opportunity for participation was limited?

2.3.4 SCHOOL BASED BOARDS OR COUNCILS

The school board or council is the typical mechanism used for participation in decision-making at school level. Through it the opinions and preferences of teachers and parents are included with trustees and administrators in making critical decisions, within particular parameters of distributed authority, on school issues. There is a commitment parent involvement in particular. There is a general agreement across the systems that central to the establishment of school councils is the nurturing of community responsibility, ownership and authority within the stated parameters for meeting the educational needs of children. There is a wide diversity in membership, responsibilities and procedures for councils across the systems. A typical council represents a wide spectrum of interests. Generally, it consists of the principal, staff, parent representatives. Many councils have community members. A few have senior students as members. Members may be elected, nominated or co-opted on to councils. In many jurisdictions, flexibility is allowed in determining the composition of the councils according to statewide guidelines, while membership is specified in others. The ratio between the categories of membership, where it is specified, generally, but not always, gives majority representation to parent and community interests. The range of issues and the level of decision-making control enjoyed by councils vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Some jurisdictions – Chicago, United Kingdom – have given local councils or boards of governors

extensive powers in some areas at least. Chicago councils have power to hire their principals. Substantial control staffing, budget and pay issues fall within the ambit of boards of governors in the United Kingdom. In some systems the local council has an advisory role only. Decisions reached may be confirmed or vetoed by the principal or the next tier in the governance structure. In other systems all members have equal decision-making authority, and decisions are reached by majority or through consensus on a more or less specified range of issues or types of decision. The concept of shared accountability and responsibility in the context of a shared authority is implicit, and in some systems made explicit, for school councils. Board procedures also tend to vary along a continuum from legally determined processes to freedom for councils to develop their own processes. There are variations in the school level councils regarding composition, responsibilities and mandates. They involve a reorganisation of the existing decision-making structure that allows many decisions to be made at the level of the school. There is no one right prescription that can be readily adopted for every situation. Perhaps this is what the initiative is about - the freedom to be innovative, and to develop a governance structure appropriate to particular needs.

2.4 SCHOOL BASED MANAGEMENT AND THE IRISH WHITE PAPER ON EDUCATION

The trends identified in this macro view of educational governance were reflected in the Irish White Paper on Education (Ireland, 1995) issued by the Irish Government as a step in the process that culminated in the Education Act (Ireland) (1998). Devolution as an administrative strategy underpinned the management structures proposed for Irish schools with the encouragement of the OECD. The White Paper (Department of Education, 1995, p. 3) states that the concern of the State "is with a number of key considerations which should underpin the formulation of educational policy and practice - principally, the promotion of quality, equality, pluralism, partnership and accountability." It lists (p. 4-5) the protection and promotion of fundamental human and civil rights, the national articulation of broad educational aims, the right of the school to nurture its own values, tradition and character within a national framework, as other principles informing the role of the State in education.

The White Paper (p.4) states, in a sentence that echoes the international literature, that the State's role in education "arises as part of its overall concern to achieve economic prosperity, social wellbeing and a good quality of life within a democratically structured society." It describes the nurturing of the holistic development of the individual, and the promotion of the social and economic welfare of society, as well the provision of skills and competencies necessary for the development of society and the economy, as national educational aims. From the point of view of the State, "the development of the education and skills of people is as important a source of wealth as the accumulation of more traditional forms of capital...(and) "links between education and the economy... are important." This linkage is not new in Irish education. It was an important consideration in the development of the Comprehensive and Community school concepts as they emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in Ireland (Mungovan, 1994, pp.15 -16).

The Paper reflects international trends in its description of the role of the board of management, the community responsibility of school management, the need for partnership, participation, and collaboration in a style of governance rooted in social equality and democratic values. The thrust is for better schools, more efficient use of resources, a more relevant curriculum to be delivered at local level through a process which is democratic, accountable and transparent.

While the general tenor of the Paper reflects international trends, there is throughout an obvious effort to respond to the needs of the different viewpoints and interests. The needs and interests of trustees and teachers are addressed, as well as parent and community needs and priorities. Partnership, based on a recognition that effective co-operation among the concerned interests benefits students and the wider society as well as enhancing the democratic process, is a recurring theme in the document.

In line with the international trends, the leadership role of the principal and his/her role, under the direction of the board, for determining the school's educational aims, formulating strategies to achieve these aims, encouraging staff and developing the school's curriculum policies is emphasised (p.151). The centrality of the teaching role and the need for supportive initiatives is recognised. The Paper states unequivocally that parents are integral partners in the education of their children with statutory entitlement to representation on each school board of management. Boards would be obliged to promote parents' associations in the schools and to develop formal home-school links(p.139 - 140). Such structures should enhance parental influence at school level irrespective of their representation on boards of management.

Accountability in various guises and through various methods is a recurring theme throughout the document and reflects the international experience. While responsibilities are devolved downwards, there is an upward as well as outward accountability, upwards to the Department and outward to the community. Reviews of practice at all levels, and careful assessment are seen as underpinning good educational practice (p.59). Quality is also a recurring theme. Equality of treatment and access are

important values that must underpin quality.

The Paper presented a framework of responsibilities within which governance structures would be developed.. he framework incorporated the responsibility of trustees for the distinctive ethos of the school; the responsibility of the boards of management for the "effective management and provision of education" in the school; the responsibility of the principal and staff for the day-to-day achievement of the objectives of the school (p.145-146). Management boards and administrators are accountable for effectiveness in the management of their schools and for the achievement of worthwhile learning outcomes by their pupils. In the main, the concepts set out in the White Paper are carried through in the Education Act (Ireland) (1998). The essential function of the board of management is to ensure effective educational management and provision for their schools. They are to enable the schools to achieve their objectives, ensure accountability, carry out their functions within the macro framework determined by the Department of Education and Science and the Trustees. Their primary focus is to ensure that the needs of their pupils are identified and addressed. To do this, they are to ensure that their schools put strategies in place, and that they will be held accountable for these. The Act puts the education provision on a statutory base. The Act did not address the decentralisation of Irish education.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed the trends in the macro governance structures and the models of management in the educational systems of the United Kingdom and a range of systems in the United States, Canada, and Australia. It has extrapolated from the literature the major trends in educational governance related to general education reform in these democracies. It has sketched factors that have contributed to a new governance ethos in these jurisdictions. In these systems, the process of schooling is moving at different rates, depending on the jurisdiction and local circumstances, from a top-down model, delivering professionalised and bureaucratised educational services to a passive audience, to a collaborative or bottom-up model of participative decision-making, where all groups, who are effected by educational decisions, participate in the process of making them. Educational systems are being opened up to allow for school level participation by parents, students, and by extension in many of the systems, interested members of the community. School-based management based on democratic principles of subsidiarity, participation, partnership, equality, and quality are a primary thrust. Decision-making based on equality and partnership forms a new framework for education, with management and accountability at the local school level, and accompanying change in the bureaucratic chain of command. This chapter has indicated that in practice, there are tensions

in this framework.

Though there are common trends underlying the developments across the different jurisdictions, a systematic, coherent and consistent model of governance has not yet evolved fully in any of the jurisdictions. Within the notion of board management, there are divergent strands being held in tension. What appears to exist is a "perception" or an understanding about boards or councils and how they should operate, which evokes fundamental ideas, symbols and metaphors. These capture the driving force of the idea and the ideals underpinning it, but this understanding, though set out within legislative frameworks, is not always clear in the minds of board members. In practice, this loose conceptual framework holds in tension several images, each vying for dominance, each useful at particular moments and in particular contexts. It may be that within a single board, and even in the mind of a single board member there is a variety of images - not all of them easily compatible - co-existing. Within this diversity there is coherence, which need not necessarily lead to uniformity, as well as a plurality, which need not lead to anarchy. There is a dynamic tension between theory and practice that may not be reducible to a single formula. To be locally effective, the same understanding and dynamics of school management may not need to be universally applied.

Based on the macro view sketched in this chapter, it is possible to delineate a range of characteristics and descriptors that may contribute to an understanding of an effective board, and effective board performance:

- It determines policy for its school in the context and within the terms of its devolved responsibilities.
- The effective board involves the community being served by the school in school decisionmaking.
- It is a proactive promoter for the school among the constituencies served by the school, and in the community. It is active in its community and with other agencies relating to education on behalf of its school.
- It maintains linkages with its constituencies in an open and positive manner.
- It is committed to open communication with its respective constituents as school policies and procedures are not private matters.
- It ensures that the different constituencies, especially the parents and the school community, are kept informed about the school's goals and objectives, as well as its progress and performance.
- Its decision-making processes are participative and democratic.

- There is a particular commitment to involving parents in all aspects of their children's education.
- It is aware of its environment, the forces in that environment that impacts on its work, and is open to change.

Involvement goes well beyond information to include active participation by the different constituencies in the school policy and decision-making processes. In most of the systems reviewed priority was being given to parent over professional interests on the boards. The relationship between the board and the principal is seen in all the systems as vital to the success of the board operations and the school. It is actively involved in the school planning process, sets goals in a collaborative way for its school and determines how they can be accomplished. The determination of policy for the school that promotes student achievement and welfare, and that takes account of stakeholder interests and input is its primary responsibility. Ensuring equity in all its operations, not just in the distribution of school resources, is seen as part of its brief. The creation of conditions that enhance productivity is a priority for the effective board. Effective boards are accountable to their school community as well as to their central authority. They respond to community views on the performance of the school, and are influenced by these views, and the views of the central authority. As part of the macro-system, and in line with a thrust that sees education as being at the service of a productive society, they seek to become aware of issues that may affect their schools and to influence the policies of the other levels in the systems.

These characteristics and descriptors go beyond structures. It is suggested that, as important as the structures of management are, the culture of management is equally as important. For reform to occur, it is necessary to modify not only the structures, but also the culture or belief system underpinning the structures at all levels in the system. This will require training and ongoing support for all involved – professionals as well as laity. Changing to a collaborative partnership system for education entails not only structural change in the system, but also a change in attitude and expectations on the part of all the participants. The full integration of school boards/councils into an education system with appropriate administrative support linkages throughout the system needs commitment at every administrative level. At local level their function is to allow for local input in educational decisions in an educational system that is at least partially decentralised. The rhetoric of school board management suggests that parents, teachers, the community to a limited extent, and the trustees should see themselves as "stakeholders" and "partners" in the management of the school. By having this involvement, the presumption at macro level is that they will be more actively involved and committed. They will have greater ownership and influence, which in turn will be a motivator for greater effort. Against this, is it possible to control and co-ordinate such disparate

interests and keep them accountable in a way that will not ultimately lead to management chaos?

The following chapter will address the reality of school board/council management. How does the reality reflect the rhetoric? It will continue to address the literature to determine what is known about how boards operate in practice. Is it worthwhile governance strategy or "all sound and fury signifying nothing?" Reality can be more complex than the simple statements of hopes and aspirations suggest.

CHAPTER THREE

SCHOOL BOARDS - A MICRO PERSPECTIVE

School boards of governors are a long-standing feature of educational management in the United Kingdom. In many Canadian, United States and Australian schools, advisory or site based councils or committees are a relatively recent development as part of an ongoing reform/ restructuring process. In size and scope these, and the boards of governors in United Kingdom schools, most closely resemble and relate to school boards of management in the Irish system. Chapter two indicated that there are significant differences in the contexts and stages of development of the boards or councils in the different countries, depending on the pace of change, among other factors. This chapter will review the literature on board/council operations with a view to discovering the current experience of these bodies. The particular focus of this review is on board operations - what is the practical experience of the boards/councils and are they meeting the expectations set for them? The chapter is set out in three main sections. Section one describes a range of studies carried out in the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Ireland relating to local and district school boards, boards of governors, school councils and boards of management. The bulk of the studies relate to the United States and the United Kingdom. Both these jurisdictions have the longest tradition of board governance. Canada, Australia and Ireland have relatively short experience of this mode of school governance. A range of earlier studies into school boards in the United States (Kerr, 1964; Iannacone and Lutz, 1970; Ziegler, Jennings, and Peak, 1974; Ziegler and Tucker, 1978; Institute for Educational Leadership, 1986) have had a formative influence on key studies carried out in the United Kingdom (Baron and Howell, 1974; Taylor, 1977; Bacon, 1978; Kogan, 1984; Pascal, 1987a). Key concepts and categories developed in these studies continue to be used in current studies relating to boards in those jurisdictions and in Canada and Australia. The studies from each jurisdiction are set out separately in order to clearly identify their context and to show that similar issues arise in each of the jurisdictions. A model can be a useful aid to understanding how the boards respond to their roles. The section concludes by identifying a range of models that describe the operational characteristics of the boards and councils.

Chapter two set out the broader context of board operations. Based on the literature reviewed in Chapter two and in section one of this chapter, there is evidence that the context in which the board operates is an important determinant of its operating style. Boards operate in the context of and in the service of schools. Section two of this chapter discusses the nature of the school as an institution. Drawing on a range of literature, it discusses a range of theories - schools as rational organisations, as loosely-coupled systems, as micro-political arenas - that seek to give an understanding of the school as an organisation, and insights into the role of the board in the context of that organisation. Schools are also organisations that seek to respond to stakeholder interests. Section three concludes the chapter. It draw together an overall range of themes – interrelated and often overlapping - found in the literature reviewed in chapters two and three. These themes will be discussed further in chapter four and will be central to the empirical study.

3.1 STUDIES

This section describes and discusses briefly a range of studies carried out in the United States, Canada, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Ireland relating to local and district school boards, boards of governors, school councils, and boards of management. It is set out in five subsections. Subsections one and two describe studies of school district boards and school councils in the United States. The earlier studies on school district boards are used because they provide a conceptual framework that is widely used in subsequent studies of boards of governors and school councils. Subsection three discusses studies of school councils in Canada and Australia. Subsection four refers to studies of boards of governors in the Republic of Ireland, while subsection five deals with a range of studies of boards of governors in the United Kingdom. Different models describing the operational characteristics of the boards can give an insight into their effectiveness. Subsection six identifies and discusses a range of models of board operations found in the literature, and concludes the section.

3.1.1 UNITED STATES - SCHOOL DISTRICT BOARD STUDIES

In the literature relating to school management, the main focus is on internal school operations centred on the principal and staff. There is relatively little reference to the managerial role of the board and the principal's role as the executive arm of the board. There is a strong impression given that school policy is primarily an internal school matter, to be determined largely by the school principal and staff. Because many of the categories and concepts appearing in the literature relating to school governance within the last three decades in the United Kingdom have appeared in earlier research into the operations of district school boards in the United States, the earlier studies in the

United States are reviewed to help determine a framework for the study of school board of management operations. A district school board is a legal entity authorised of established by a state. In most cases, it is an elected body, and has responsibility for organising and administering public schools and other educational programmes. These studies relate to these boards and they continue to be cited in current studies. Kerr (1964), Iannacone and Lutz (1970), Zeigler, Jennings and Peak (1974), Zeigler and Tucker (1978), and Danzberger et al. (1986) are examples of these studies. The studies also relate to a core element in a board's effectiveness – its responsiveness in the context of the values of participatory democracy to its stakeholders.

Zeigler, Jennings and Peak (1974) used a range of concepts that continue to appear in board studies at all levels of the educational systems across the jurisdictions discussed in chapter two. Among these are the representative role of the board, the superintendent-board relationship, the influence of context on board operations, the policy role of the board and its relationship to administration, board decision-making, and board culture. They were interested in testing the extent to which the practice of district school boards in the United States measured up to the democratic ideals on which their existence was based, and their effectiveness as vehicles for those ideals. The primary focus of the study was on the issue of the representative role of boards - how in practice did they measure up to the democratic principles which underpinned their existence? The study was a contribution to a debate about who governed America's school systems, a debate prompted by a perception that it was the professionals who controlled the schools.

That education boards were to be non-political was an accepted tenet in school governance in the United States at the time of the Ziegler study. This had implications for the representative nature of boards. In the view of Zeigler et al., the depoliticisation of boards had in practice insulated schools from the realities of their environments, enhanced the power of the professionals and made schools less responsive to the views and concerns of their constituents. It appeared that board members were expected to see their role more as guardians of the broad community interest and that of the school, rather than as delegates or representatives of particular interests. They suggested that boards were at a distance from their communities, and had low levels of board /community interaction. Boards were not legislatively supreme and were not representative of, or in tune with, their constituents, not because they were unable to be, but because they did not want to be. The boards, rather than being representative of the community are "more likely to be spokesmen for the superintendent to the community." (p.250). They argued that boards should be more political, though

they admitted that the evidence that "political" school boards performed their representative functions better was "far from compelling." (p.142).

The role of the administration and especially the superintendent *vis-à-vis* the board was a central concern raised in the study. Zeigler et al. believed that the role of the superintendent was too great. As a way to counteracting the power of the superintendents, they believed that boards should take a more critical and oppositional stance in their relationships with them. The outcome might be a reduction in the power of the superintendent, and a policy-making process that would be more democratic. The study concluded that boards merely legitimised the recommendations of their superintendents and were more likely "to be spokesmen for the superintendent to the community" rather than truly representing the community (p.250). The primary influences on the board members were the professionals, rather than their fellow board members. Boards did not exercise true legislative control over their schools. By legislative control they meant that elected board members ought to make policy. It was the role of administrators to implement it. They concluded that boards "should either govern or be abolished." (p.254).

The cultural norms that seemed to inform board operations, particularly its decision-making, tended to the creation of "elite" rather than "arena" board behaviours. Bailey (1965) used the concepts of "arena" and "elite" board behaviours to describe the culture of board decision-making. Becker (1970) described the culture of board decision-making in terms of "sacred" and "secular". "Elite" and "sacred" cultures were generally similar in practice - decisions were arrived at with the agreement of the members rather than by vote, by relatively few and in relative privacy, while "arena" and "secular" boards arrived at decisions in public, involved a wide range of views and decided by open voting. The operational processes of a "sacred-elite" board would have less involvement and more consensus-style decision-making than a "secular-arena" board. A board operating out of a "seculararena" culture made its decisions by open vote after public debate. There was an implication in this approach that consensus style decision-making was less preferable. Constituents had less access to the elite board. This was reflected in the behaviour of the board and its interactions with constituents - their willingness to approach the board, and the extent board decisions were reflective of community opinion. Boyd (1976) argued that boards operating in a "sacred" culture placed a high value on professional expertise, and contributed to an apolitical, conflict free style of board meeting generally supportive of the superintendent. As the leader of the professional team advising and providing information to boards and as its executive arm, the superintendent was in a strong position of influence. Mann (1975, p.79) used the terms "trustee" and "delegate" to describe board member orientation. A trustee was someone whose decisions were based on his/her own values, even-though those represented might disagree. The delegate on the other hand gave priority to the views of constituents, even at the expense of his/her own views. Mann identified a third type - the politico - who acted according to a trustee or a delegate orientation according to the dictates of the particular circumstances.

A study into the culture on boards conducted by Kerr (1964) has had considerable influence on subsequent studies in both the United States and the United Kingdom. Though Kerr's conclusions stand on a limited study, the two central concepts he addressed - socialisation and legitimisation - appeared widely in subsequent literature. He described how new board members were socialised into a role orientation supportive of the administration's point of view, and a culture, which was, in the terms of Bailey and Becker, "elite" or "sacred." Both superintendents and fellow board members provided this cultural initiation for new members. The direction of this initiation tended to reinforce the perspectives of the professional experts. Kerr described the school board as an agency of legitimisation which "rubber stamped" rather than made policy. School board members had limited contact with their constituents. He argued also that under some conditions "which may not be uncommon, school boards chiefly perform(ed) the function of *legitimating* the policies of the school system to the community, rather than *representing* the various segments of the community to the school administration, especially with regard to the educational program." (p.35).

Boyd (1976, p.551-552) criticised the Zeigler, Jennings and Peak (1974) study, and challenged their conclusion that boards should operate according to a political model that was essentially "arena-secular." He argued that in many, perhaps even most, school districts the superintendents and their school boards, usually attempted to act in harmony with what they perceived as the predominant community values and expectations. In his view, since

... schoolmen usually seek to avoid conflict, it is unlikely that they will often attempt to give the community other than what the community wants.

As to professional dominance of the board policy, and especially dominance by the superintendent, he made the point that they were working within pre-determined limits in these areas. While community and professional influences vied and interacted in policy-making, the latitude for local discretion left by state and national forces in the area of policy was limited (p.550). By implication,

Boyd raises two pertinent questions – the relevance of boards if their scope in responding to community needs is as limited as he seems to suggest, and how can community needs be discerned other than through communicating with the community? He suggests that the perceptions of "schoolmen" – the professional educationalists - of what was happening in their communities and of community needs were sufficient and that there was little need for extensive consultations.

In the context of Boyd's observations, the work of Iannacone and Lutz (1970) has relevance. This work on power, politics and policy was an in-depth case study of electoral change and its impact on school politics. Their findings were reflected in those of Ziegler and Jennings and Peak (1974) and seemed to justify their call for greater political influence on the board and greater accountability from the board. In the view of Iannacone and Lutz, while superintendents dominated the system and public access to decision-making was limited, this was not the entire picture. School district boards, and their superintendents, in a closed system may operate an "elite-sacred" decision-making style and become isolated from the communities they served, especially in periods of substantial social and economic changes, but they were not independent of these communities. The study suggested that the election process was the most effective tool for ensuring the accountability of the governors to the governed - effectively a very limited form of retrospective control. If a board did not give satisfaction its might not be re-elected.

Zeigler and Tucker (1978) returned to the question of "who governs." Using on-site observation, documentary and interview survey data, they examined board decisions and communication patterns in eleven school districts. The study asked how boards did or did not represent their constituencies. How did the governors, and those governed, or on whose behalf the governors governed, relate to and interact with each other in terms of "responsiveness." They described two main forms of responsiveness - congruent and representational, both of which focused on the relationship between "constituent preferences and government activity" (p. 418).

The two forms - congruent and representational responsiveness - differed essentially in how the policy-making process took account of the preferences of constituents. Congruent responsiveness did not necessarily involve constituents actively in the decision-making process. Constituents "...hold general attitudes or expectations but they need not communicate such expectations to decision-makers. Responsiveness exists when the policy actions of the government reflect the attitudes and expectations of the constituents." (p.39-40). It could be in the form of agenda - where

representatives articulated the policy concerns of their constituents and acted on issues that the public felt were important, or symbolic - where they focused on board processes, and whether constituents felt that they were represented and had access. In the case of representational responsiveness, policy-makers listen to their constituents, "develop a series of alternative means of satisfying demands, mediate conflicting demands and ultimately reach a decision which is formulated in response to the most dominant or most persuasive set of demands." (p.38-39). It could be in the form of service - responding to individual requests, policy - how far lay preferences and community opinion were reflected at meetings and in decision-making, or influence - the extent to which constituents felt that their views influenced board members. The responsiveness concept has a broad spectrum of meanings relating to board members attitudes to their role - their orientation, the activities and processes of the boards and the relationship between the board and its constituents.

Ziegler and Tucker (1980) compared the two sets of data from 1974 study of Zeigler et al and their own study of 1978. Both studies accepted that there was professional dominance of the system. They predicated two main reasons for this. Firstly, boards were not representative and responsive because they did not want to be. Their dominant culture was "elite" rather than "arena." Secondly, boards were insulated from the political process and from pressures from their constituencies. They argued that the structure of boards reflected their apolitical status, and perpetuated a culture that underpinned attitudes and behaviours current on boards. Tucker and Zeigler (1980, p.11) described two governance styles in terms of "hierarchical" and "bargaining." In the hierarchical style, professional expertise was the driving force on the boards. The boards acted "less as decision-making bodies and more as communications links between the superintendent and the public." (p.6). The bargaining style was more participative and involved all the stakeholders. They set out what they saw as an ideal scenario for policy-making at school board level. They stated that

... the public elects a school board to make policy. The board appoints a superintendent to administer policy. The administrators follow the mandates of legislators, who follow the instructions of their constituents. The major source of power is electoral support and the norm of policy-making is responsiveness to public demands and preferences (p.11).

They argued for a bargaining style of governance that involved all the participants equally. While they argued for this ideal they concluded, "the preponderant form of decision-making in school districts we have studied is that of the hierarchical or technological model. Experts dominate laymen." (p.229).

Kerr, (1964), Zeigler, Jennings and Peak (1974) and Zeigler and Tucker (1978) indicate that boards, in their *de facto* operations, did not measure up to their ideal operating mode. The policy-making process did not conform to democratic norms. Boards were not responsive to public demands. Effectively, governance was in the hands of the superintendents, whose views, expressed through direct proposals and advice to a generally uncritical board, which acted mainly according to a trusteeelite-sacred orientation, were most powerful in policy-making in the systems. Since the superintendent was an employee of the board, the board, though it tended to "rubber-stamp" his/her actions or proposals, did so freely, knowing that they could decline. There was a low level of public involvement or knowledge of the policies of the board and little ongoing representation of community interests at board level, except when there were upheavals and new boards.

Many of these issues are addressed again by Danzberger et al. in their Institute for Educational Leadership study (Danzberger et al., 1986). The study found that there was general "grass-root" support for school boards, but very few people knew much about their roles and responsibilities. People's involvement with the boards was episodic and their knowledge tended to be anecdotal. In a conclusion, which echoed the views of Zeigler, Jennings and Peak (1974), they found that the apolitical nature of boards, in the view of many, contributed to boards being isolated and politically ineffective. Boards were not willing to take the political risks needed to provide leadership for educational reform. They were not investing enough time in learning about educational issues and policy-making, and were not collaborating with other agencies in meeting the needs of students. The orientation of board members was raised again. Some board members saw themselves as trustees of the public interest. Other members saw themselves as representative of specific groups. They saw themselves as accountable to their constituents (p.17). As part of a system with the responsibility for implementing state education policies, the boards were not exercising adequate policy oversight or maintaining accountability. A common complaint from board chairpersons was that boards spent too much time on administrative details, and too little on significant issues of policy or major concerns, such as educational quality or outcomes. State and federal requirements often left the boards trapped in issues of micro-management.

The tendency for the boards to micro-manage raised questions about the board/superintendent relationship as it related to the board's policy-making prerogatives and the responsibilities of the superintendent. This issue was raised Danzberger et al. (1986). They found that boards relied on the superintendent to manage the district, develop the agenda, and recommend policy for board

consideration and adoption. The study found that fewer problems existed in this area when the relationship was not too tightly defined and where mutual trust and openness prevailed in the relationship. The study also pointed to a change in the environment in which the boards were operating and found that there was a shift of power and influence. Finn (1991) also noted this shift. As in the earlier studies, the representational role of the board member was raised. Changes in the communities served by the boards were giving rise to calls for changes in the way the boards operated. Danzberger et al. held up the prospect of irrelevancy to boards that did not change. Finn considered that the boards in their current form were ineffective particularly in meeting the needs of the developing technological age. Ineffective boards were being marginalised, their funding was being diverted to other initiatives. In his view

The boards have become part of the establishment. They participate in the peculiar politics of an arena occupied by the suppliers of education services - the employees and managers of the system, the vendors who sell it things, and the interest groups that prey upon it - taxpayers that underwrite them. (p.28)

For Danzberger et al. and Finn the decision-making powers of the boards were being eroded precisely because they were unable or unwilling to deal with the real problems facing education. Their power was being eroded on two fronts - by central departments taking greater control of financing, and by the concept of school based management that put greater responsibilities on schools. Boards were reacting to their new environments. Both Danzberger et al. and Finn found that the district boards were becoming more representational in their operating styles. This, according to Danzberger et al., was reflected in more conflict and interpersonal tensions on boards.

Out of these studies, a range of issues related to and important for the current study emerges. These include the role of the board in the context of the school and in the macro-context of educational management, its representative nature, its links with and responsiveness to its stakeholders and its community, alleged professional control of boards, the role of the principal and his/her relationship with the board, the importance of relevance in ensuring the board's existence, the internal board culture and its decision-making processes, how board members are introduced to their role and to the board. The impact of the political environment on board operations is also an important issue that emerges from the studies. The concepts and issues described in this section arise in most of the studies in other jurisdictions relating to school councils, boards of governors, and boards of management. The following section will discuss a range of literature relating to school councils in

the United States.

3.1.2 UNITED STATES - SCHOOL COUNCIL STUDIES

Chapter Two of this study indicated the complexity and variety of educational governance in the United States. School-based councils, where they exist, are responsible for school-based management, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on their terms of reference. The setting up the councils was often a matter of local initiative, and the result of the availability of federal grants. Grants were made conditional on parents being involved with the school through such councils. The rationale for the councils appeared to be based on two assumptions that were also found in other jurisdictions. The first assumption appeared to be that through these councils, staff expertise in the schools could be brought to bear on the problems of the schools by involving the staff in school leadership and decision-making at council level. The second assumption appeared to be that if schools were to be reformed, then all stakeholders in the school had to be involved. The school council provided an opportunity for the increased involvement of parents and community in helping the school.

School councils are relatively new in schools in the United States. In some states, they were not put in place until as late as 1990. There is a range of studies dealing with aspects of school councils and school-based management in the United States, but few comprehensive studies. There is a large volume of prescriptive literature dealing with the role of councils. The following is a limited sample of mainly primary studies chosen on the basis of a search of the ERIC database that focused on the operating experience of the school councils in the United States. These studies were selected as the most directly relevant from over fifty studies that were identified and acquired. In the main, the studies tend to be descriptive rather than analytical and located within one state or metropolitan system. Malen and Ogawa (1988) focused on whether the councils had really changed school decision-making. What councils did was a focus for Easton et al. (1991). Van Meter (1991) raised questions about the local school councils in Kentucky - were they intended to have a policy role, a management role, or some combination of the two? The involvement of teachers in school reform in Chicago Public Elementary Schools was the issue for a study by Sebring and Camburn (1992). Whether local school councils were operating in a democratic, open and participatory manner was the question asked by Easton and Storey (1993). Peterson-del Mar (1994) offered an overview of councils which indicated their complexity across the range of state systems, their general thrust, and

key operational issues for their effectiveness. A Report of the American Association of School Administrators (AASA, 1994), written from the perspective of the school principals identified problems for the educator where councils existed. Kannapel et al. (1994) used a modified form of Easton's (1991) model in examining "the extent to which decision-making was shared among the role groups involved in school-based decision-making (SBDM)." (p.4). Brown (1994) summarised studies on the teachers' role on councils. The changing roles and realities of the school principal working to school councils under school-based management in Chicago was examined in a limited study of ten elementary and four high school principals by Ford (1994). Bacchus and Marchiafava (1991) and Wohlstetter and Briggs (1996) also refer to the role of the principal working to school councils.

The thrust of council business was raised in a number of the studies. According to Malen and Ogawa (1988) parent and teacher members joined the councils "largely because they wished to be informed or felt obliged to serve. Membership was rarely issue-driven or change oriented." From the perspective of the parents, principals were very often perceived to be using the councils as "... channels for dispensing information, moderating criticisms and garnering support, not as arenas for redefining roles, sharing power, and making policy." (p. 259). Easton et al. (1991) found that the bulk of the council's agenda tended to be given over to administrative matters. Nevertheless, though the range of involvement and concerns of the councils tended to be administrative, they had a policy content within their delegated mandate. Van Meter (1991) recognised the shift of authority from central office to parents and teachers that allowed them to make decisions on school matters. He argued that school councils should function within a framework of existing central policy. He found that many of the responsibilities and activities assigned to the councils related more to administration than to policy (p. 54). His study raised a central issue – what is the relationship of a school council to a central authority, and its operating thrust within the context of a central authority? The issue impinges on the role of the council. This was also an issue identified by the AASA Report (1994). From the point of view of the Association, the structure of the councils and how they fitted into the governance system were key factors in determining their thrust and their impact on education.

Easton and Storey (1993) queried whether or not local school councils were operating in a democratic, open, and participatory manner. They categorised the school councils in their study into four governance types that they described as limited, moderate, balanced, and excessive. On the limited governance councils there was low participation. School professionals, particularly the

principals, controlled these councils. Moderate governance councils had medium participation by members but were still dominated by the principal. The balanced-governance councils had moderate participation. Principals and council chairpersons shared leadership, and parent and community representatives played a vital role. The councils that fell into the excessive category had high participation rates, a greater number of proposals than other councils, and ran antagonistic, long and numerous meetings. The councils studied by Malen and Ogawa (1988) could be described as limited governance councils. Contrary to their expectations, Malen and Ogawa found that, although the councils were authorised to be policy-makers, principals and professionals controlled the partnership. The noted a reluctance among parent members to become involved and to participate fully in the work of the councils. Perceived professional dominance, lack of information about the school, and lack of clarity about their role and powers as council members, inhibited parental participation. Parents, though well qualified in their own areas, were reluctant to challenge the teacher-professional on professional issues, and the professionals were intent on maintaining control. The professional control of the agenda resulted in safe rather than controversial issues dominating the business of meetings. The Parents' Coalition for Education in New York City (1993) found that the implementation of school-based decision-making was cautious, politically correct, determined according to the professional's view of school restructuring, with weak teacher and only token parental involvement. Against this background, school-based decision-making was neither democratic nor effective.

How participative school councils were in practice was also the subject of a study by Kannapel et al. (1994). They focused on decision-making as a measure of participation. They used a modified form of Easton's model to examine "the extent to which decision-making was shared among the role groups involved in school-based decision-making (SBDM)."(p.4). They differentiated between three types of council - balanced councils, educator-dominated councils and principal-dominated councils. They found that only one of the councils practised balanced decisions "although this school appears to be regressing toward a principal-dominated mode in 1993-94 under the leadership of a new principal." (p.9). In three of the councils, teachers and principals dominated decision-making, although on two of these parents had begun to play a stronger role. The remaining three councils served as advisory groups to the principal and did not appear to be moving toward broader participation in decision-making. The councils that practised some level of decision-making made key decisions in areas such as budgeting, scheduling, and to some extent curriculum. All the councils

participated in decisions on personnel and, to some extent discipline. Councils that acted in an advisory capacity mostly rubber-stamped decisions made by the principal or teacher committees. Malen and Ogawa (1988) found that the councils acted more in an advisory or endorsing role supporting the principal and teachers, so the inclusion of councils in the decision-making process had not altered the process (p.256). According to Malen and Ogawa (1988), and Kannapel et al. (1994), the role being played by the councils in decision-making was limited. In all the councils, the principal and the teacher members continued to play a central management role.

Though the principal continued to exercise an influential role, the existence of the council and the presence of parents and teachers on the council had changed his/her role. According to Bacchus and Marchiafava (1991), the existence of councils and related reforms was creating a new leadership dynamic, and was changing the authority and accountability of principals. In a study by Ford (1994), the principals reported that in the changed environment of educational management in Chicago, they now shared authority with various groups and consulted with their councils and staff on most decisions. While they had greater discretion over budgeting and flexibility in organising their school programmes, they found they worked longer hours, had less job security, were more accountable to more people, and had more responsibilities but not more pay. They saw themselves as having assumed the roles of information provider and leader for their local councils. The AASA report (1994), written from the perspective of the school principals, identified instances where educators, and in particular the principal, could be caught between the council and the district school board. Councils, according to the Association, had the power to abuse their authority in ways that could disable competent principals. The report cautioned that inexperienced and uninformed council members could make unsound decisions. It tended to be negative towards councils and protective of the traditional role of the principal whose customary role as primary decision-maker was likely to change as others were empowered to make decisions formerly the principal's exclusive domain. In Chicago, one of most important roles given to local school councils when the councils were created was the right to hire or dismiss their principals. Currently, a debate is raging between the councils and the school districts as the districts, citing abuses at some schools as the their reason, are seeking to curb that right (Hendrie, 1999).

Kannapel et al. (1994) identified as critical factors for the success of school councils the facilitation and support of the principal, the leadership of other council members, attentiveness to the need for parent involvement, and council training. These factors contributed to effective school-based decision-making and the reverse impeded its implementation. They noted that school based decisionmaking

 \dots can be effectively implemented even when circumstances are not ideal if informed individuals exert leadership (p.16).

Wohlstetter and Briggs (1996) concluded that the most successful principals were effective in moving four critical resources - power, knowledge and skills, training and information, and rewards to teachers and community members. The role of the principal was changing from direct instructional leadership to the broader one of orchestrating decision-making through teams and interacting with a wider range of people, including community members.

Through school councils, not just the principals, but also the teachers and parents were participating in new ways of school governance. Brown (1994), in a summary of studies on the teachers' role on school councils, and in her own study, concluded that without teacher input and participation in decision-making, reform in schools had no positive or lasting effect. From the perspective of the teachers, membership of the councils gave them an opportunity to present their professional perspective on issues and to have input into school decisions that concerned them (Enderlin-Lampe, 1997 p. 151). Sebring and Camburn (1992) made the point that teachers had had little input into the shaping of the school reforms or the revised governance structures in schools. Nevertheless, the response to their study indicated a generally positive attitude among teachers towards the changes in their schools. They found that in schools characterised by shared decision-making, strong leadership, teacher collegiality and community support, teachers were more favourable towards reform. They found that revised governance structures alone were not enough. What was important to teachers was a supportive work environment, especially in the areas of social and human relations.

Peterson-del-Mar (1994) offered an overview of councils across the range of state systems, their general thrust, and key operational issues for their effectiveness. Ideally councils are "a broadly representative group of people, who skilfully blend diverse experiences and viewpoints into wise decisions that are effectively carried out."(p.1). Ideally, they bring diverse experiences and expertise to a problem, facilitate implementation of decisions and policies generally, and ensure that the common good gets precedence over single strident or persistent voices. The findings of Malen and Ogawa (1988), Easton (1991), Kannapel et al. (1994), present a picture of the practical operation of the councils that showed that they fell far short of the ideals outlined by Peterson-del-Mar. Their

findings suggested that the inclusion of the councils in the decision-making process had not substantially altered the traditional patterns. The principals and the teachers had not yet moved significantly from their traditional roles towards an acceptance of the role of parents. There was a need expressed by council members for better access to information. Parents needed to take initiatives, but did not feel confident or free enough to challenge existing processes. Councils needed support and monitoring from the district education offices. The councils had not changed the traditional influence relationships between principals, teachers, and parents and these needed to be changed if councils were to be a success. Malen and Ogawa (1988) concluded that establishing councils would not create new patterns of decision-making. They recommended that influence relationships on councils be modified, and that:

... councils be empowered with lump-sum budgets rather than discretionary funds; teachers and parents be granted principal selection and dismissal powers; members need independent sources of information, more specific definition or roles and responsibilities, and options to have district policies waived; special training regarding council dynamics is needed for teaching staff as well as parents (p. 266-277).

The school council concept in the United States is a relatively young initiative. Their purpose is to create effective partnerships between schools, parents and their communities, and through these partnerships to improve leadership through the involvement of teacher and community expertise in revised management structures in a way that would make schools more effective and accountable. The councils have powers ranging from just giving advice to making controversial educational decisions affecting staff and students. Their areas of concern range across budget, personnel and/or curriculum. Many of the councils enjoy only partial delegated authority in one or more of these areas. The degree of discretion councils have is within state regulations, district regulations, and contractual agreements, and as result varies widely across the systems. The concept, in general, offers the possibility of broadly based decision-making and widely shared responsibility. As in the other jurisdictions discussed in the following sections of this chapter, there is some ambivalence about their specific roles locally and within the macro management structure for education. One lesson from the studies is the necessity to ensure that support is provided to locally constituted bodies to enable them to meet their responsibilities in the manner expected of them. In general terms, the school councils in the United States are equivalent to the school councils being established in Canada and Australia. The following sub-section outlines a number of studies relating to school councils in Canada and Australia.

3.1.3 CANADA AND AUSTRALIA - SCHOOL COUNCIL STUDIES

Reflecting the shorter history of school-based boards and councils in Canadian and Australian schools, there is a more limited range of literature on their operations, and their effectiveness as vehicles for participatory democratic values. School boards in Canada refer to school district boards organised along similar lines to district boards in the United States. School councils refer to school based councils established in the context of school based management. Brown (1990) studied a model of school council management in Edmonton, Canada. He found that where there was selective devolution of authority to schools, the use of participatory decision-making depended very much on the attitude of the principal, and there was little evidence that it was being practised. The decisionmaking model underlying the structure did not necessarily mean participatory decision-making or the granting of greater control to parents. The school district board and the principal were in control. Accountability measures through budgetary and other procedures intensified central over local control. There was a preoccupation with efficiency conceived as cost accounting, which resulted in increased consciousness among staffs about levels of expenditure (p.260). From the perspective of the schools, the main advantage was a level of local flexibility. This flexibility, Brown reported, could lead to school improvement, in that it allowed schools to be more responsive than they might be under a more centralised structure. He found that it did not lead to local innovation (p.259). A significant weakness was that it was time consuming. It was not until 1993 that the Canadian provinces started to give serious consideration to revising their school governance structures.

Collins and Cooper (1995) studied pilot school councils in Newfoundland, and Jenkinson (1995) studied school councils in Alberta that had come into existence under the 1988 School Act, particularly in relation to their powers. Collins and Cooper found that there was a general agreement among councils on their main objective - to improve student achievement and to assure the involvement of students, parents, community members and educators. Both Collins and Cooper, and Jenkinson found that the most critical issues that emerged in their studies were the authority and functions of councils. There was some disagreement on whether councils should have decision-making authority enshrined in legislation, or whether they should be advisory only. Almost all participants in the Collins and Cooper study, both at school council and board levels, claimed that there was a need to define the functions of councils specifically in legislation. In Alberta, Jenkinson claimed that activist parents were claiming that school councils were "toothless wonders." The

...neither govern the school nor involve themselves in determining professional practicesGood schools with good principals will stay good. Bad schools with bad principals will stay bad.

The parents were demanding policy-making power over the selection of principal and staff, disciplinary procedures and optional curriculum. They saw themselves as fighting against the corporate self-interest of the school district boards and the professionals. They suggested that the school district boards themselves be disbanded in favour of fully empowered school councils. The school boards were taking the view that the councils could determine their preferred level of involvement in the school on the basis that the law under which they operated specified that they may "advise" and "consult" with the principal on "any matter relating to the school" (p.31).

In putting school councils in place, the objective of the district boards was partnership with schools, not to disband themselves and to set up mini-school boards. Some councils were seeking more extensive powers than were being allowed to them - powers which would allow them to impose their priorities on the school administration and school programme, to `hire and fire' staff, and monitor the curriculum. There were different expectancies of partnership on the part of the district boards and the councils.

In Australia, too, there has been a devolution of centralised educational functions to school councils (Angus, 1990). Australia did not have district school boards. The terms board and council are used to refer to school based councils depending on the state or territory. The seven states/ territories are involved in developing school-based management systems. The structure of the councils and how they operate varies from system to system. In Victoria, the use of sub- committees promotes a wider staff and community participation. In the ACT, the councils are smaller in number and make less use of sub-committees. Most of the state governments require or are encouraging the setting up of school-based councils or boards. The balance in membership on the boards/councils between the different interests has generated controversy in Australia as in the United Kingdom. Councils/boards are being invested with powers to set policies, approve budgets and evaluate school programmes.

Hierarchical forms of decision making are quickly disappearing, with principals now expected to consult and reach consensus with a wide range of individuals and groups. There is continuous change and the school that attempts to respond to everything is quickly

overwhelmed. (Caldwell 1992, p. 7)

Councils established as part of the school-based governance plans are evolving. Similar themes to those found in the United Kingdom and the United States emerge. There are opposing sets of findings on the functioning of the school councils in the reformed Australian systems. Gamage (1992 and 1994) describes a study he conducted with Bell (1991) in a region of New South Wales to determine the processes through which councils were formed, reasons for the delays in their formation and their operational effectiveness. Gamage commented that delays and slow progress in promoting community participation in school governance in Australia were the result of indetermination on the part of the governments concerned, and the local politics of other interest groups such as teacher organisations, parents, community groups. The study used a research sample of all councillors in 21 councils. The response was 75%. Of the respondents 78% reported that the school principal took the initiative in forming the councils. Over 90% of the respondents were satisfied with the composition of the councils, felt that the councils were not dominated by any particular individual or interest group, perceived the council proceedings to be fair to everyone and that no meetings had been cancelled due to the lack of a quorum. Of the council members who responded, 53% believed that the establishment of the council had improved the learning/teaching environment, while 88% stated that they were either happy or very happy to spend their own time for school council work. Gamage presented a very positive picture. Though structures, procedures and processes had not yet been fully developed, the level of satisfaction with the operation of councils was very high.

Gamage (1993, p. 146), in a similar study of the operational effectiveness of Victorian state school councils conducted in Victoria over a two year period, found that in the schools he looked at

the councils have become effective and efficient organisations, while the principals are highly satisfied and totally committed to the collaborative form of governance adopted in the terms of school council system.

Gamage (1994, p. 123) gave a fuller report on the study. The study aimed at preparing an

exemplary model of school based governance based on one of the longest surviving, democratically devolved systems of school administration.

He found a level of satisfaction with the overall functioning of the councils in terms of their

participatory mandate in excess of 90%. The study collected data relating to eight criteria. On five of these, there was a satisfaction rating of over 90% - the current composition of the councils, the committee structure, adequacy of information, the decision-making process itself and the overall functioning of the council. Three quarters considered the power and authority vested in the councils as adequate, while 66% perceived that there were some improvements in the teaching/learning environments. Of these, 35% stated that there were significant improvements as a result of the implementation of the school council concept. 59% believed they had adequate time for council business, while 15% considered the time as more than adequate. Gamage found it significant that they enjoyed. He found that the representatives of the stakeholders were accountable to their electorates as well as to the department for funds placed at their disposal. They used newsletters and meetings to render this accountability.

Roe (1993) and Deliar (1994) present a less positive picture in two other states. Roe identified two significant problems with the implementation of school councils in New South Wales. School councils were proposed, based on the desirability of community participation and the principle of local decision-making. There was a reluctance among school staff to endorse the establishment of a council, and a reluctance among the local community to be involved in decision-making concerning education through the medium of a council. Dellar (1994) reported on the implementation of a school-based management programme called "Better Schools" in Western Australia. Dellar's experience did not reflect that of Gamage and reflected to a greater degree the generality of the experiences in the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States. Central to "Better Schools" was the establishment of school-based decision-making groups that permitted school staff and community representatives to exercise more autonomy over decisions concerning educational policy and development in the school. In the implementation process, he found that among the problems encountered were uncertainty about organisational aspects of the "Better Schools" concept, lack of positive collaboration among the stakeholders, conflicting information sources being used by principals and parents, and staff resistance. The study, according to Dellar, showed the complexity of the relationship pattern in a school and indicated that schools were open social systems in which change was dependent on context and setting.

In the Australian context, Forlin (1994) and Stanley (1994) raise the legal framework of the changing environment as an issue for school professionals. In particular, they raise the issue of the

legal framework for devolution. Forlin argues that educators are not well prepared for the new autonomy being given through devolution. He contends that few, if any, countries have developed an appropriate legal framework for devolution. School autonomy, he argues, can only have meaning if it is supported in law. Given the multifaceted nature of education law, no single piece of legislation can remove the existing model. Stanley makes a similar point in relation to school principals. In the absence of legal and ethical frameworks, principals in New South Wales were being faced with ethical dilemmas resulting from the conflict between self-determination rhetoric, the constraints of regulations, and the reality of how schools currently operate. He argues that school principals are finding themselves overtly confronting ethical dilemmas emanating from tension between their personal, professional judgements on issues, increasing community demands for greater involvement in school decision-making, and the restrictive regulatory frameworks within which they were being obliged to operate. The point, argued conceptually by Forlin and Stanley, is implied in the practice of school management and, in particular, the relationship between the school professionals and their boards as described by Deem and Brehony (1990), Maden (1993), and Shearn et al. (1995) in the context of their studies on boards of governors in the United Kingdom.

Boards of management in Ireland have a longer history than the school councils in the United States, Canada and Australia. As indicated in the introduction to this study, there has been little formal study of the functioning of boards of management in Irish schools. The following sub-section will refer to the studies that are available.

3.1.4 IRELAND - BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT STUDIES

No research, apart from a case study conducted by the writer (Mungovan, 1994), was identified which dealt directly with boards of management in second level schools in Republic of Ireland. Three studies dealing with boards of management at primary school level were identified - Keohane (1979), Hanley (1989) and Moran (1991).

Mungovan (1994) found in his case study that there was a significant gap between what was envisaged for the school board of management and what it was actually doing. If the findings of that case study were representative of boards in general - and this claim in not being made - they would indicate in practice that:

- With increasing professionalisation and bureaucratisation of education, the role being played by the board in developing educational policy is secondary to that played by the professionals administrators and teachers. An elite group - the professionals alone or influential persons or groups on the board effectively control decision-making on board.
- 2. Boards appear to legitimise the policy recommendations of the principal by "rubber" stamping them. They are reactive more than proactive in policy development at school level. Board members, rather than adopting an independent stance, have been socialised and co-opted into accepting the administration's perspective. The locus of power in the school would appear to rest in the principal.
- 3. Boards are unduly concerned with administrative matters to the detriment of their strategic role, and rarely take a long-term view of their school. In practice, the boards take greater interest in administrative issues over issues of policy. Pragmatism rather than planning would seem to characterise board operations. This may be a factor of circumstances as the board members did indicate that they were interested in policy issues.
- 4. The latitude left to the local discretion of boards, though it appears to be broad, is unduly limited and contributes to an element of frustration among some board members.
- 5. Boards and their members, apart from the teacher nominees, are generally unresponsive to their constituency groups and have little public accountability.
- 6. While boards have an inherent potential to be effective managers of their school, in practice they do not deliver on the egalitarian and democratic values on which they are based. For the most part, boards do not manage.
- 7. Though the introduction of the board of management structure into Irish schools has afforded greater opportunity for community involvement through devolution, participation and collaboration in the governance of the schools, in practice this involvement has not had a significant impact on traditional patterns of power and control within the system. In Irish schools, professional educators dominate the educational policy-making process.

- 8. The board of management has significant responsibilities and powers relative to the school. For the most part they do not fully appreciate and exercise their powers to govern, rather they legitimise the recommendations of the principal.
- 9. The understanding of policy as being the domain of the board and administration as being the domain of the administrative team gives, at most, a limited insight into board practice in Irish schools.
- 10. The school board of management has provided a platform for sharing of decision-making among school trustees, parents and teachers and this is appreciated by the different groups and is seen as being to the benefit of the school.

The study indicated that the introduction of the board of management structure into Irish schools afforded greater opportunity for community involvement through devolution, participation, and collaboration in the governance of the schools. If the findings of the case study are general, then, for the most part, boards do not govern. They fail to deliver on the egalitarian and democratic values on which they are based. Stakeholder involvement has not had a significant impact on traditional patterns of power and control in the system. The policy-making process continues to be, at least, strongly influenced by professional educators.

A study by Keohane (1979) on primary school management remained for many years the only contribution to research on school boards in Ireland. She found that the majority of board members were female from professional and managerial occupations. Lay members of boards, in particular, contributed to meetings mainly in discussions relating to finance, fund-raising and maintenance. Although they were not specifically excluded from contributing to discussions on curriculum, they generally did not. She found that there was a problem with the provision of information to boards. She found (p. 144) that board members were dissatisfied and disillusioned with their level of participation in the management of their schools.

Hanley (1989) investigated the contemporary functioning of a sample of twenty-four boards of management of primary schools in Dublin city and county, focusing on the role of parent representatives on these boards. She found (p. 264) that "parent representatives do not have the same degree of control over critical resources possessed by their professional colleagues." Their control

of the boards was substantially limited by the conduct of meetings, by the limitations implicitly imposed on agenda and discussion at these meetings, the fact that meetings were held on school property, and the episodic nature of meetings. They also lacked expertise, knowledge and managerial experience. Their professional colleagues controlled information and training. Frequently, they had difficulty in understanding and evaluating the work of the school and had to rely on professional definitions. There was no independent complaints procedure and they lacked expertise that would enable them to determine areas of accountability. Chairpersons and principals controlled procedures and parent representatives fell victim to a socialisation process determined by them. Their links with other parents were tenuous in the absence of a forum. Relative to the professionals they felt of lesser status, yet despite their lack of real power, they were a potential source of conflict for the school professionals and the professionals realised this. Not all the parent representatives were "passive and deferential towards professional leadership." (p.266).

Boards of management in the Republic of Ireland and school councils in the United States, Canada and Australia are relatively new. They do not have the tradition of the boards of governors in the United Kingdom. In the following section a range of studies carried out in the United Kingdom is discussed. Across all the studies, the categories and the frameworks used reflect the studies of school boards in the United States.

3.1.5 UNITED KINGDOM - BOARD OF GOVERNOR STUDIES

Because of its long history of school boards of governors, there is a sequential and coherent range of studies relating to school board governance in the United Kingdom similar to the range of studies in the United States relating to the district school boards as described in Section 3.1.1 above. The changing context of school management in the 1960s and 1970s described briefly in chapter 2, section 2.2.3 above, awakened interest in the work of school governing bodies.

Gordon (1974) described his history of school governance in Victorian England as "an attempt to examine and assess not only the work of the school manager, but the changing conception of management especially in response to administrative, political, legal, social and economic pressures." (p.xii). Many of the issues at the heart of the studies in the United States, and current in the debate in the 1970s and today about boards, are reflected in Gordon's study. Among these are the relationships between the boards and external community agencies, constraints on managers

particularly by Government departments or their agents, policy/administration and the manager's function, the general definition of the manager's function, the manager's role relative to the board when one existed, the composition of boards and parental representation on governing boards. He argued that from

simple beginnings, the work (of school management) became increasingly sophisticated and time-consuming, especially after the introduction of the school board system (p.287).

According to Gordon, the Victorian boards were predominantly middle class structures taking decisions about working class education within a framework of centralised control through a national curriculum, examinations, and a reward system for good results. In practice, local school managers were left with relatively little discretion.

The issues of representation, function and power were also considered by Baron and Howell (1974) and Taylor (1977), Kogan et al. (1984), Golby (1985, 1989 and 1990), and are still alive in the current debates. Baron and Howell (1974) were concerned with roles and relationships on governing boards, in a context where it was felt that these might need to be reassessed because of a growing democratisation of political life generally, and amidst calls for greater control by the beneficiaries of services. They saw the governing bodies as "being on the periphery of the network of relationships that constitute the educational system..." The bodies were (p.193) "...without anchorage in any structure save that of the local education authorities to which they are subordinate and yet in potential competition." The Taylor Report (1977, Sec. 2.14) also noted that "there have been very significant changes in the context and atmosphere of school government." This had resulted in part from "a demand for broader participation in educational decision-making which has come from lay and professional people alike." Baron and Howell (1974) proposed that the role of boards should be revitalised. It was hypothesised that this might require greater devolution from local education authorities (LEAs), which were growing in size, to schools. Arguing for a more open governance style, they proposed that the majority of governors should be other than LEA appointees, that chairpersons of boards should be able to meet and compare views, that school governance should be promoted in the media, and that the functions of boards be published. They looked to the possibility of extending the powers of governing bodies as part of a move to an enhanced form of participatory democracy generally. Governors, in their view, should act as advisors to schools, filtering local views.

The Taylor Committee (1977, p. 103ff.) argued for an extension of the role of the board of governors within a democratic structure for school government. Governing bodies should have a precise and unambiguous understanding of their role in the school. Their duties should include general responsibility for the school curriculum with a major role in curriculum decisions, staff appointments, financial matters, enrolment and dismissal procedures and community use of school premises. Effectively, no school matter should be excluded from the attention of the governors. Their report concluded that governors were insufficiently representative of their school communities, therefore the composition of the boards needed to be changed. It recommended a radical change in the composition of governing bodies with membership shared equally between LEA representatives, teachers, parents and local community. The notion of equality of representation on boards and a partnership between boards of governors and schools are important in Taylor's thinking. According to Golby (1985, p. 28), the Taylor report was so significant that all subsequent research findings, most notably Bacon (1978) and Kogan (1984). were directly related to it.

On the governing bodies themselves as they were currently functioning, Baron and Howell (1974), Bacon (1978) and Kogan (1984) found a wide diversity of role and function. This diversity, in practice, was related to lack of clarity on the substance of the governor role. According to Taylor (1983) the teacher and parent governors were often unclear about their functions, and how they might perform them. Kogan (1984) suggested that there were differences in role perceptions among governors (p.130ff.). Because of the position the governing body occupied in the educational administration structure, much of its time was spent reacting to the concerns of others, its work and priorities were outside its own control and fashioned by what other institutions and groups send its way. The body was "ebbing and flowing according to the needs of others." (p.144). Golby (1985), based on his study of the internal dynamics of the board, and on areas of potential influence and role conflict among the interest groups involved, echoed this lack of clarity. For Golby (p. 78) the expectations of the policy makers for school government were not being fulfilled at the level of the boards. Clarity regarding the function of the board could mean more effective governors. For Pascal (1987a, p. 199 and 1988, p. 27), lack of clarity and a failure to define the powers and responsibility of the partners on the governing bodies was a potential source of serious conflict. Poor communications, lack of information, lack of resources, inadequate support, uneven distribution of power on the board between the various elements, and professional control were serious impediments to the effectiveness of the governing bodies. The boards were having some success in developing liaison, monitoring and giving support.

The expectations of the policy makers for school government were not always realised in the reality of school government on the ground. Baron and Howell (1974) found that though governing bodies had definite functions assigned to them in rules and articles of management, this was no guarantee that they lived up to their roles. The effect of participatory and democratic management practices on boards was a concern for Bacon (1978). Based on his study in Sheffield, he outlined the roles of governors as deflectors of pressure from the LEAs, channels for community accountability, and monitors and legitimators of policy. An absence of role clarity often resulted in new governors being subtly incorporated or socialised into existing power structures. Governors were being allowed a limited role and not invited to concern themselves with policy issues which were regarded as "quite properly the prerogative of the local educational leadership." (p. 174). The role of boards was likely to remain "a marginal and largely symbolic one." (p. 174).

Using a framework similar to that of Bacon (1978), Macbeth et al. (1980) described Scottish School Councils as they were operating in 1980. They found that the councils continued "to deal with educational peripheral matters..."(p.3). School-community issues such as transport, school-home issues such as attendance and non-educational in-school issues such as maintenance, remained the main preoccupation of the school councils. While there was a gradual increase in the proportion of educational matters dealt with over the period 1975 to 1980, "curricular items remained at less than 1% of total items..."(p.4). They concluded that the councils lacked involvement in issues of central educational concern to schools and exercised a limited role.

Bacon (1981) came to a similar conclusion, but on a wider scale. He detailed the general history of lay participation and included studies from Canada, U.S., England, Scotland, Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, Italy and Scandinavia. He concluded that these studies supported his own findings from Sheffield (1978). Despite changes in school governing bodies in many countries, authority still remained with the educational elites. He found that there had been a movement away from giving governors real power. In the discussion on parent empowerment and democratic processes, the value of decisions taken on the basis of expertise is sometimes forgotten. David (1996, p. 6) argues that good decisions are made by those "who are informed about and care about the issues and who know the context in which the decision will be carried out." In her view, some decisions are best left to the appropriate group who have the strongest personal stake and the most immediate connection to the school.

Kogan et al. (1984) saw their study as complementing "the broader survey work of Baron and Howell by making an extended observational study of the governing bodies in each of four case study local authorities (p.8)". Kogan (1984, p. 6) suggested that Bacon's findings (1978) showed that "new participants simply swelled the ranks of a consensual educational lobby." Governing bodies had accepted only a shadow of the role envisaged for them in the Taylor report. He described school governors as "sleeping beauties awaiting the kiss of politics." (p. 130ff.).

Kogan et al. (1984) and Macbeth (1984) based on their research developed separate sets of models of board operations that they used to describe to the practice of the boards as they found it. Kogan et al. placed boards within an accountability framework. Based on their data, they constructed four possible models for governing bodies: 1) accountable, 2) advisory, 3) supportive, and 4) mediating. The advisory board was concerned about the school but uninterested in monitoring the professional life of the school. The mediating board brought together the different interests and was a forum for inter-group negotiation. The supportive board saw itself as advancing the interests of the school in the community and bringing community support for the work of the school, while the accountable board was interested in how the school was functioning and actively monitored school performance. They found "that in their current operation governing bodies, and even more so groupings within them, exhibited characteristics from all the models presented . . . " (p.161). The position any governing body occupied on the spectrum at any time was determined by the issue being dealt with, and the powers it was allowed exercise by the school and other interests. The position was also the product of past traditions, the ways of working preferred by the school principal, the governors themselves, and the chairperson. They found that over the period of the study, most of the governing bodies acted in a manner closest to the advisory model, and none could be characterised as operating the accountable model. They were not seen as accountable by their appointing authorities, by schools or by most of their membership, and "lacked the authority, resources and, for the most part, inclination for such a role." (p.164). But the policy makers expected that boards would hold their schools accountable. The Green Paper "Parental Influence at School: A New Framework for School Government for England and Wales" (DES, 1984) had clearly underlined these expectations. Kogan et al. (1984) as well as Golby (1985), and Pascal (1987a) demonstrated the gap that existed between the expectations of the policy makers and the reality of school governance.

Macbeth (1984), in his study of the systems of school government of the states of the European

Economic Community, classified governors' roles along a continuum of participatory action into deciding, ensuring, advising and informing - a model he had set out in his study of Scottish School Councils (1980, p. 23-24). Deciding referred to the kind of decision-making the board was involved with, whether it was at the level of making rules of applying rules. Ensuring was equivalent to holding the school accountable, through checking on performance. Advising was equivalent to exercising influence, and communicating related to the whole communications and information infrastructure of the board. He described how governors saw their orientations variously as trustees, delegates, shareholders, representatives or participants. While there appears to be a substantial level of overlap between the models presented by both Kogan and Macbeth, Kogan's models appear to be more comprehensive and less prescriptive as descriptors of board operations. Macbeth's models with their focus on rule determination as a focus for decision-making seems more limited in their scope than policy-making as understood by Kogan.

These studies pre-date the 1986 and 1988 Education Acts in the United Kingdom. These Acts decisively altered the environment of school management, enhanced the role of the boards, and extended the role of parents in particular. After the powers of the boards had been extended, but still too early, perhaps, for the impact to be obvious on boards, Munn and Holroyd (1989, p. 1) studied Scottish Schools Councils around the "issue of perceptions and achievements by board members." In practice, the role boards were playing was still limited. They lacked real financial powers and were seeking greater power (p.38). The major roles played by governors were to support their schools, to express the viewpoints of parents, and to help refurbish their schools (p. 27). Governors recorded considerable frustration because they felt that they had achieved nothing (p. 29). Echoing Pascal (1987b), they predicted that with such feelings of inadequacy, governors could become "disillusioned and disheartened and (the) boards will fall."(p.35).

How the boards used their powers was also a central theme in a study by Thody (1990). She argued that governors in the United Kingdom, while they had significant devolved powers to control and direct schools, had developed covert functions predisposing them towards being supportive and protective of the school principals and staffs. New board members were being absorbed into existing "elites" and were being prevented from becoming contenders for power. Curtis (1993) found evidence of the covert form of management described by Thody. She found, echoing Kogan (1984), that the governing bodies in her study saw their role primarily in terms of being an advisor, supporter and critical friend to the school. She also found that perceptions of role often varied considerably

Further studies, and particularly those of Deem and Brehony (1990), New et al. (1993), and Maden (1993) suggested that Kogan's consensus continued to be reflected in the practice of governing bodies across the United Kingdom. Deem and Brehony (1990, p. 335), found

that consumers were only able to make rapid decisions on matters like charging where the head and/or local education authority (LEA) had already thought through all the issues and produced something straight forward for governors to endorse.

They suggested that participation was less about the democratisation of the system than a means "to draw on the specific skills and expertise of a minority of governors, mainly from business, at no extra cost to the system while the local apparatus of administration is dismantled piecemeal." (1992, p.18 - 19). Their study was based on a longitudinal study of school governing bodies,

New et al. (1993) concluded that a transfer of power to consumers in education was not yet complete. Wells and McKibben (1990), Hellawell (1990), Arnott et al. (1991), New et al. (1993), Maden (1993), would seem to confirm that while governors were becoming more aware and confident in their roles, they continued to be preoccupied in practice with issues related more to administration than to policy or to strategic decision-making. There appeared to be a gap between the board and core school activities, a lack of appreciation among some board members of their role or its boundaries, and a perceived sense of isolation among others. Wells and McKibben (1990) concluded that while governors generally appeared to be aware of the issues related to school planning and the construction of the school development plan, they were not involved in the detail of these issues. Their main priorities were financial management and the acquisition of resources. The findings of New et al. (1993) that matters to do with teaching and learning got limited discussion and consideration at governors' meetings echoed those of Bacon (1978), and suggested a continuing

limited role in practice for governors.

Issues around roles, relationships and procedures were central to Maden's (1993) survey. The outcomes of her survey pointed to a concern about the boundaries between the respective powers and duties of heads and governors, and what was meant by "oversight" "internal management" and "policy-making." In relation to decision making and accountability, the survey found that there was a consensus view that by far the most important function of the governing body was to "support the

work of the school." Its role as "critical friend" or "mediator" was not experienced to be significant. No consistent practice was evident when heads choose to inform or consult or propose options to governors on significant curriculum related issues. Governors seemed to have been particularly well informed about administrative issues. There was far less evidence of data associated with monitoring trends and patterns, or checking of progress towards agreed targets within a school's development plan. Much more time seemed to be spent supporting schools than was spent in calling them to account.

Shearn et al. (1995) examined how governing boards had become involved in curriculum, finance and personnel issues - areas in which they were given specific responsibilities under the Education Reform Acts (ERA). They found that heads and teachers had worked hard to retain their professional autonomy in curriculum matters and had succeeded. Nothing had changed in this core area of the educational process. Boards included in the study invariably delegated curriculum matters and both boards and professionals appeared happy with this arrangement (p.116). In the area of finance, they suggested that the main role of boards should be in loosely monitoring the finances, and being used by the headteacher as a sounding board on selected issues. Generally, budget formulation was delegated to the headteacher. There was little evidence of debate around issues such as staffing or resources (p.117). Governors did like to become involved with personnel issues and appointments at all levels. They concluded (p.117) "that the governors' new found responsibilities are not being exercised to any substantial degree."

A constant theme in the restructuring of education in the United Kingdom reflected in these studies is a shift from an emphasis on the role of the producer of educational services (the LEA and professional educationalists) to that of the beneficiary. This shift was given legislative expression especially through the Education Acts of 1986 and 1988. The ethos of management described by Kogan (1984) and Macbeth (1980 and 1984) and others, in which the dominant determinant was the school and its value-system within the LEA structures, began to shift due to the changed composition of governing bodies and their extended powers. This shift is still in process. Relationships within the boards, and between the boards and their environments are evolving. A new setting for school management seems to be developing as the attitudes and practices of the wider community, board members and educational administrators are changing against a background of growing assertiveness and increasing conflict. The boards/councils are part of a strategy to expand the responsibility and authority of the local school for the improvement of school performance, and, ideally, mechanisms for the introduction of a collaborative approach to improving schools in response to community needs. The findings of the studies in the United States into the operations of school councils raise similar issues to those raised in the studies of school board governance in the United States, and local governance of schools in the United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. The same question is being asked of school boards of management or councils, as was asked of district boards and board members - is the devolution of school governance delivering what its proponents claimed it should within the management of council and a concern about the extent to which school board governance complies with these. Primary among them is the concept of democratic governance that facilitates stakeholder participation and access - participation and access that in the rhetoric surrounding the establishment of the board is intended to influence school policy. It is this concept which is the primary justification for the board of management model of governance.

A model is a useful aid to understanding how the boards are responding in their roles. Different models give different views of the operational characteristics of the boards. A range of models found in the literature will be outlined in the following subsection.

3.1.6 BOARD OPERATING MODELS

A range of typologies or models describing the response of school boards/councils in their role as managers of their schools is described in the literature. Along with the models of board operations described by Bailey (1965), Becker (1970), Mann (1975) outlined in section 3.1.1. and by Macbeth (1980 and 1984) and Kogan et al. (1984) discussed in section 3.1.2. above, the following were also identified.

In the case of boards of governors in the United Kingdom, Macbeth (1980 and 1984) classified governors' roles along a continuum of action into deciding, ensuring, advising, and informing. Kogan et al. set school boards of governors within an accountability continuum that suggested a framework for analysing the roles actually played by governors. Thody (1990) and Curtis (1993) found along similar lines. They found that boards of governors had developed covert functions predisposing them towards being supportive and protective of the school principals and staffs.

Curtis (1993), echoing Kogan (1984), stated that the governing bodies in her study saw their role primarily in terms of being an advisor, supporter and critical friend to the school, though this often varied considerably within the same board.

Sallis (1988, p. 153ff.), based on her experience of in-service courses, found that in the view of headteachers, governors fell into three broad categories:

The poorest experience is of governors who scarcely get involved at all, but who would be expected on the whole to be harmful if they did, the harm ranging from ill-informed comment to dangerously ill judged intervention.

Headteachers adopted a strategy of telling these governors as little as possible, and accepted that if their impact on the school life was marginal, it was just as well. In the second category were those governors who were "not very deeply involved, but at worst harmless and at best vaguely welldisposed." Headteachers responded by being pleasant on the whole, being glad to see them in the school now and then, "but perhaps relieved that not much more is expected." In the third category were those governors who were supportive, who came into the school as often as they could, acted as strong advocates for the school and as energetic and positive ambassadors for it in the community. She described the headteachers response to these, mischievously, in terms of the drunk and the lamppost - "grateful for the support but not keen on the illumination." Overall, she presents a view of the headteachers as being very patronising and cynical. In terms of involvement, Wallace et al. (1990), suggested a related framework - that participation on a school committee can be along a continuum from "no involvement" over seven stages to "total participation."

Shearn et al. (1995) suggest a further typology of board operations. They differentiated boards into three groups based on the role of the principal as determinant of their predominant modes of operating. In the first grouping the principal took the major role with governors' approval, either by default or by outmanoeuvring governors. They suggested that governing bodies in this category were least likely to exercise their responsibilities under the reform acts. In the second category, responsibility was shared between the principal and the chair of governors on an implicitly agreed basis, differentiated between two forms of relationship - nurturing which emphasised mutual support, and monitoring which emphasised the board's ultimate responsibility for the school, and its strong input into the school. In the third category, conflict existed and areas of responsibility were contested. There were signs that the relationship between principals and governors was not smooth. There was disagreement but its extent varied and there was "jockeying for control of some aspects of school activity." (p.183). The role of the principal on the board is an element in all these frameworks and in Curtis, Thody, Wallace, Easton and Shearn, it is the primary reference point in their typologies.

Easton et al. (1993) proposed another typology or framework for understanding the different governance approaches taken by school councils throughout the Chicago Public Schools in the 1991/92 school year. They placed the councils along a continuum from limited through moderate, to balanced, to excessive governance. Among the limited governance councils there was low participation in meetings and few motions were proposed. School professionals, particularly the principals, controlled these councils. (p.1). Moderate governance councils had medium participation by members. Some motions were proposed. The councils were on very cordial terms with staff and the principal dominated the meetings, which were efficiently run. Moderate councils were not active leaders of their schools except in crisis situations. The balanced-governance councils had moderate participation, and the members proposed a moderately high number of motions. These councils were perceived as being true leaders in their schools. They often took stands on issues of importance to the community. On these councils, principals and council chairpersons shared leadership, and parent and community representatives played a vital role. Those councils that fell into the excessive category had high participation rates, a greater number of proposals than other councils, and ran antagonistic, long and numerous meetings. The study concluded that the most effective form of council was a balanced council. A balanced style of council was based on genuinely shared leadership, mutual respect and a strong commitment from its members. Such councils were found to be most effective in school policy making and leadership. (p, 4). Of the fourteen councils in the study, two followed the pattern of limited governance, seven practised moderate governance, while three used a balanced approach to governance. Two councils followed a style of excessive governance. The researchers stressed that the style of governance can change over time in any of the schools (p.4).

These models echo the findings of the earlier studies in the United States in their references to the responsiveness of boards (Zeigler and Tucker, 1978), the representational or professional orientations of boards (Mann, 1975), their hierarchical or bargaining styles of governance (Zeigler and Tucker, 1980), the elite/sacred or arena/secular cultures (Kerr, 1964; Becker, 1970). The *de facto* operations of boards did not measure up to the ideal - whether that was responsiveness /

accountability or participation. The policy-making and other processes did not conform always to the democratic norms set for them. Many boards were more receptive to professional direction than they were responsive to their constituencies. There is evidence that the context in which the board operates is a significant determinant of its operating style and evidence that this context is rapidly changing in most educational environments as a result of the trends discussed in chapter two. The internal environment of the school being managed is also an important factor.

Cameron (1981), Cameron and Whetton, (1983) and Heffron (1988) argue that the governing structure and its effectiveness will relate to the nature of the organisation it serves. The board of management structure in schools is a model of management that reflects a particular form of organisation. It is presented as a model of management that reflects that context. As a model, it seeks to marry the values of its trustees and community values with the nature and the inherent values of the school as an educational institution. The following section will discuss the school as an organisation.

3.2 SCHOOLS AS ORGANISATIONS

Schools are complex institutions serving an ever more complex society. The board of management and the school administration operate in this environment. Managing and leading the school involves a daily interaction with a variety of groups and individuals from both inside and outside the school - groups and individuals who are variously motivated, and who have varying perceptions of the nature of schooling and their role in the process. This complexity is compounded by a framework of regulations, diverse pressures, and the many publics to which the school is simultaneously responsible, many of them with differing, even conflicting demands. There are a number of theories that seek to give an understanding of the school as an organisation and the behaviour of people in it and an insight into the nature of the role of the board of management. This section will discuss some of these theories - schools as rational organisations, as loosely coupled systems, as micropolitical arenas, and the stakeholder theory of organisation. In chapter four an argument will be made linking the concept of effectiveness to the understanding of board as an organisation, and the use of the stakeholder theory as the basis for an approach for determining board-effectiveness.

The concept of the school as a rational organisation designed to achieve specific organisational goals has been a dominant model for policy makers and educational administrators. Hoy and Miskel (1992,

p. 104), relating themselves to the work of Weber (1947), state that schools are seen as formal structures designed to achieve specific organisational goals. The behaviour of individuals in the schools is viewed as purposeful, disciplined, and rational, in a relatively closed system with high levels of predictability, clearly defined authority structures, and objective regulations, to which each person is expected to conform. The model of organisation underlying this understanding focused on rational decision-making, clear and explicit goals, the enhanced efficiency and the effectiveness of the school as an organisation. Efficiency was achieved according to a pre-determined plan and under a supervisory style of leadership, usually provided by the principal. From this perspective, Musgrave (1968) and Banks (1976) described the school as a structure designed to achieve particular goals along relatively predictable and consistent lines. Ball (1987 and 1992) and Broadbent et al. (1991) suggest that the local management of schools legislation in the United Kingdom appears to assume a rational institutional perspective on organisation and leadership.

Baldridge and Burnham (1975), and Weick (1976) challenged this rational approach to school management. Baldridge and Burnham (1975) suggested that the goals for a school, its structures, activities and outcomes were not tightly and logically connected with clear lines of communication between the different elements. They indicated that the collective welfare of the organisations, and what was good for it, was not a primary consideration for people in it. People in the organisation were not seen as rational actors in organisational terms, and schools were not rational systems. Weick (1976) put forward the view that educational organisations were composed of loosely linked parts with multiple goals and diverse technologies. He suggested that the elements of the school as an organisation were frequently only "loosely coupled" rather than tightly interrelated subsystems. In this perspective, schools are presented as complex social systems of people working together in mutually interdependent relationships. While the elements are responsive to each other, each still preserves its own identity and its own physical and logical separateness.

Elements may consist of events like yesterday and tomorrow (what happened yesterday may be tightly or loosely coupled to what happens tomorrow) or hierarchical like top and bottom, line and staff, or administration and teachers ... means and ends.... Other elements that might be found in loosely coupled educational systems are teachers-materials, voters-school board, administrator-classroom process-outcome, teacher-teacher, teacher-parent, teacher-pupil. (pg.4).

Meyer and Rowan (1983) and Firestone (1985) suggest that the view of schools as loosely coupled systems is more realistic than the traditional view of them as rational-bureaucratic systems.

The insights of Hoy and Miskel, Baldridge and Burnham, Weick, Meyer and Rowan, and Firestone suggest a view of the school as an organised whole made up of a network of interacting individuals, groups and sub-systems. These are held together through control structures and procedures which maintain communications, and promote their common purpose through planning and organisation. They suggest a relatively porous interchange between internal groups and sub-systems among themselves and with the external environment. This perspective represents a clear shift from the view of schools as bureaucratic-rational structures.

Another theoretical framework of schools as organisations is that of micro-politics (Glatter, 1982; Bush, 1986; Hoyle, 1986; Ball, 1987). This framework seeks to describe the politics that take place in and around schools, but particularly the internal political phenomena characterising the ongoing work of managing the school. Glatter (1982, p. 161) argued that a micro-political perspective was essential to understanding school administration and management. Schools, according to Bush (1986, p. 68), are political arenas where individuals and groups interact in pursuit of their interests. Power is a central consideration with the role of the individual or group in decision-making determined by their relative power (p.71). Hoyle (1986) argues that politics is inevitably concerned with interests. He states (pp. 256-257) that "micro-politics embraces those strategies by which individuals and groups in organisational contexts seek to use their resources of power and influence to further their interests...." The major elements of micro-politics are interests, interest groups, power and strategies. Ball (1987) argued, using case studies and teacher interviews, that behind the formal structures and procedures of schools there is another form of life where compromise and negotiation are just as important in the struggle for the definition of the school. He saw boards as organisations which are "arenas of struggle... riven with actual or potential conflict between members... poorly co-ordinated ... ideologically diverse." (p. 19).

While Ball (1987) cast doubt on the rational theory of school organisation as it applied to management, Bates (1988) criticised its application in relation to teachers. He argued that attempts to standardise the work of teachers had not had the level of success in raising productivity achieved by the scientific management of industrial processes. He based his criticism on an understanding of the teacher's task and of schools as workplaces where relationships were defined by discipline, sites where interest groups struggled with each other, and conflict was dissipated by the availability of varied programmes and courses. Schools were arenas of cultural and ideological struggle. Davies

(1994, p. 13) described schools and colleges as "incredibly messy in day-to-day organisation terms, possibly more so than industrial organisations because of education's inherently conflicting and often unattainable goals..."

Marshall and Scribner (1991) identified some of the themes found in the micro-political approach to schools. Among these are the ideologies and values of those involved; the negotiation of boundaries as between parents, pupils and teachers; adjusting and applying policy to "fit" the school; the symbols, interactions and language used in creating the "school reality" and which determine what issues are normal, relevant and critical, or irrational, irrelevant or illogical; how conflict is managed; what coalitions or loyalties develop. In their view, though categorised in micro-political terms, the micro-political approach recognises the uniqueness of each school and the importance of the circumstances in determining the nature of its operations. Greenfield (1995, p. 61) argues that schools are unlike other organisations in important ways which make their administration difficult. In schools, realities are multiple and they are understood subjectively. The school "represents a negotiated social order." (p.61). In that sense they are political arenas where the ongoing efforts by teachers and administrators as well as among parents and students to influence others through the exercise of formal and informal power are played out.

In the micro-political framework described by Bush (1986), Ball (1987), Bates (1988), and Davies (1994), Marshall and Scribner (1991) and Greenfield (1995), the focus is on the strains, the tensions, the rival interests competing in the school setting. It is on the processes by which schools arrive at decisions and determine policies and procedures, and how power, influence and control are used to further individual or group interests. The micro-political approach to management focuses also on how actions are rationalised and legitimised, and how conflict, which is taken as inevitable, is managed.

A further framework which appears to derive from the loose-coupled systems and micro-political approaches, and which is implied by Greenfield (1995), emerges from the stakeholder theory of organisation as proposed by Freeman (1994), cited by Donaldson and Preston (1994), and elaborated by them as commonplace in the management literature (p.65). According to Donaldson and Preston (1994, p. 68), stakeholder theory posits a model of the organisation in which "all persons or groups with legitimate interests participating in an enterprise do so to obtain benefits, and there is no *prima facie* priority of one set of interests and benefits over another." The enterprise does not exist to serve

the owners' interests alone but to serve the many stakeholders who have an interest in it or who may be harmed or benefited by it. In setting corporate direction and formulating strategies, the interests of specific stakeholder groups and individuals are taken into account. The enterprise is seen as an "entity through which numerous and diverse participants accomplish multiple, and not always congruent, purposes." (p.70). Weiss (1995, unpaginated electronic document), responding to Donaldson and Preston, accepts that though stakeholder theory may be plausible "there are cracks in the conceptual and empirical foundation on which it rests" particularly in the business environment of a capitalist society. He distinguished between the owners of the business and the business or enterprise itself. Stakeholder theory, he believes, confuses the person who conducts the business the owners - with the conduct of the business itself. While seeing the business "as a nexus of interests, it fails to note that the owner ... and not the enterprise is always one of the parties to the contract ..." Within the moral structure of capitalism, it is inconsistent to limit the rights of owners by "importing the interests of stakeholders into the operation of the enterprise." This, he suggests, is a straightforward claim on the property of owners, and suggests that the rights of stakeholders rest on a weak legal and philosophical justification. He argues that the exclusive claims on the enterprise by its owners are morally justified because they have used their own property to create the enterprise, while he accepts that this argument may not hold outside a capitalist framework. If the rights of the owners to define and control the enterprise are repudiated, its managers would be effectively in control and their legitimacy would be derived from a stakeholder model of the enterprise. He concludes that if one is to challenge "the conventional model of the enterprise that serves its owners' interests, one needs to advance an alternative view of a society."

While Weiss is arguing in the context of business in a capitalist society, there are echoes of his views on the rights of school-owners in the current debate on educational management in Ireland. In the organisational model proposed by Donaldson and Preston the fact that there are stakeholder interests is accepted. The more fundamental questions are what stakeholder interest(s) drive the board and the school, and in whose interest(s) does the school or the board operate?

At the heart of the decentralisation process is a recognition that conditions at the school level may vary considerably as a result of local culture, traditions, environmental conditions, and leadership styles among other factors. In this context, the sub-systems loose-coupling, micro-political and stakeholder models may contribute to a better understanding of the school policy process, the interactive nature of the role of the school board of management and the environment(s) of policy implementation. These approaches would seem to have particular relevance with regard to the move to greater local autonomy at school level with the *caveat* that "effectiveness may also depend on the personal and untrammelled will of those in charge of it or the actors involved." (OECD, 1995, p.37). In relation to organisations, there is a growing body of literature heralding the death of the bureaucratic form of organisation (e.g., Dumaine, 1991; Heckscher and Donnelion, 1994). Yet, according to Marsden, Cook, and Knoke (1994), over 74% have written job descriptions, and 80% have rules and procedures manuals. Written job descriptions are encouraged by employment legislation. Managers are often pulled in contradictory directions by conflicting recommendations resulting from organic or hierarchical/ mechanistic conceptions of organisations. This has relevance for the board situation also. Each approach is based on its own set of principles, and persons or groups working out of either model have expectations of how things are done. Crossing the models can lead to confusion particularly in people's understanding of participation and the locus of authority within the organisation.

Busher and Saran (1992) highlight something of the importance of and the confusion regarding an appropriate organisational model for educational institutions. They identified and explored four paradoxes that seemed to be emerging between the intentions underpinning the school management legislation in the United Kingdom, and the realities of practice. While strengthening the management hierarchy, there was a commitment to involving staff through consultation. Staff was being offered participation and influence in decisions, while the powers of senior management were being enhanced. Schools were being exposed to greater market pressures through competition, while being encouraged to co-operate in the construction of curricular and institutional development plans. In the context of strong central government prescription, a competitive market was being created between schools. In a similar vein, Pusey (1981, p. 224) as cited by Vickers (1994, unpaginated electronic document) explained what he termed "the permanent tension between teaching and administration." Pusey suggested that the more teachers paid attention to the needs of individual children in the always unique context of particular classrooms, the more these needs took precedence over those aspects of learning and curriculum that could be standardised and, therefore, subjected to administrative control. Thus, while teachers argued that they needed greater professional autonomy in order to do their jobs well, system managers asserted that unless the criteria for the assessment and evaluation of performance were standardised, it would be difficult to improve the efficiency of the education system. The interests of central level required standardisation, while differentiation was an important value at local level. These paradoxes seem to exist in, and to be part of the centralisation/decentralisation tension at the heart of many of the reforms discussed in chapter two.

The breath of the spectrum of approaches or models - sub-systems, loose-coupling, micro-political and stakeholder - suggested as helpful in understanding schools implies a level of discomfort with the ability of any model to adequately describe the school as an organisation. Schools do not lend themselves easily to categorisation in such strict organisational terms as contracts, goals, hierarchies, and measurements. Values such as commitment, the sense of obligation, the personal as opposed to the contractual in the educational relationship underpinning the school as an organisation are not easily categorised or measured. There appears to be a need for a model or metaphor that can help in the understanding of schools, and their leadership and management in terms of people and their relationships to one another, and which can help map the intricacies of schools from within a school's value system. Such a model might link schools to the wider society, not just in terms of economics or management theory but in a holistic way that reflects the community base of the school, and might give educational management an identity, and a purpose in educational terms. There is a body of literature around leadership describing new value-based thinking about leadership rooted in human development concepts and motivation techniques that may contribute to such a model (Greenleaf, 1974; Rost, 1991; Covey, 1992; Jones, 1995; Bly, 1996).

Senge (1990) is one of more prolific contributors to this literature. In the mid 1980's he introduced the concept of the learning organisation, as well as a set of values to support the concept. All in the workplace were considered part of a learning organisation with a shared vision, and the role of the leader became that of designer, teacher and steward – terms that might usefully be applied to the role of the board of management. As designer, the leader fashions the governing ideas of purpose, vision and core values of the organisation, assists in the development of policies, strategies and structures that could translate the guiding ideas into decisions and create learning processes. As teacher, the leader helps everyone in the organisation articulate the values which inform their work, and as steward cares for and serves the people they lead and the mission which underlies the organisation. A return to values is also at the centre of recent work by Sergiovanni. Sergiovanni (1994, p. 214-226), long an advocate of the application of organisational theory to education, began to question the relevance of current organisational models being used in educational administration and suggested that educational administration needed to develop an identity of its own. It might also go some way to address the reservations expressed in the range of dissenting views across all the

systems on educational reforms discussed in chapter two of this study. School-based management would seem to require a flexible management approach in the face of a multiplicity of values and demands in the school environment, and structures that are capable of responding to wider considerations than just internal school efficiency.

3.3 CONCLUSION

Chapters two and three have described and discussed a range of initiatives and practices in both the macro and micro-contexts of school boards of management and their equivalents. Chapter two has shown that the context and the practice of educational management is changing rapidly as traditional routine practices and systems, which have been relatively homogeneous in their structures and values, are being challenged and revised. Change has become the primary characteristic of the environment within which most current school boards and councils function. Driving this change are devolutionary policies based on participative democratic ideals such as community involvement through collaborative decision-making; calls for greater responsiveness by the educational system to the needs of the individual, the community, and the wider society; the belief that those affected by educational decisions should have an input into them and a consequent responsibility for them; and calls for participative processes that broaden the exercise of power to include parents and teachers with trustees, or other related interests. These ideals imply operational changes in the environment and conduct of management as they require greater ongoing consultation and communication with a wider range of individuals and interests based in the school as well as in the community. They require an ongoing assessment of needs and the development of appropriate responses to them, greater community based support for collaboratively planned initiatives on behalf of the children of the community as well as school-based initiatives to meet individual and community needs.

The notion that education is a shared responsibility that intimately involves the entire community, since it involves the children of the community, is being incorporated into educational planning at macro-level and is a recurring theme in each of the jurisdictions discussed. Educational structures are being revised to reflect this thrust. In the United Kingdom the boards of governors have been restructured. In the United States and Canada, local school councils are being introduced, and in Australia local school boards are being developed. Boards of management in Ireland are not immune to what is happening in the wider environment and the Education Act (Ireland) (1998) has revised

their remit, made their responsibilities more explicit and made them more accountable. The boundaries of the boards cannot be impermeable to the realities that are shaping life in their communities. Ball (1987, p. 247) states that schools as organisations cannot be conceived as independent from the environment, nor can they be analysed simply in terms of adaptation to that environment.

Chapters two and three are linked on the assumption that what happens at the level of the school board of management depends on the macro environment in which these boards operate. Chapter three examined a range of literature relating to board operations in the changing educational contexts described in chapter two. The chapter identified a range of studies based in the United States, Canada, Australia, Ireland, and the United Kingdom relating to how school boards and councils functioned in practice. In these systems, based on the concepts of decentralisation and devolution, responsibilities are being devolved from central to intermediate or local school governance structures in the interests of such values as competitiveness, productivity, quality, and local accountability. There is a concern in all the jurisdictions that the rhetoric of devolution may not match or, in some instances, have any realistic relationship with the reality. The general thrust and the findings of the studies suggest that there is an underlying core of common concerns and themes relating to the practical application of the principles stated for the revision of structures across the bulk of the studies. Many of these themes are clearly identified in the studies of school boards in the United States carried out in the 1960s and 1970s. Highly influential studies such as those of Bacon (1978) and Kogan et al. (1984) in the United Kingdom, and other studies in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and Ireland make constant reference to the studies in the United States.

In the body of literature relating to school district boards in the United States (Kerr, 1964; Iannacone and Lutz, 1970; Ziegler, Jennings, and Peak, 1974; Ziegler and Tucker, 1978; Danzberger et al. 1986) responsiveness to society's demands and expectations for boards is taken as a key measure of their effectiveness. These studies suggest a concern with greater accountability, equity and effectiveness in schooling as well as for new governance models and board roles that would open up the schools to the winds of change, and make them more responsive to the educational needs of the individual and the community. They suggest a need for stronger leadership at school level. Boards had the potential to be, but were not being effective instruments of school governance and leadership at this level. The work of Ziegler, Jennings and Peak (1974) and Zeigler and Tucker (1978) put the primary focus on the representative nature of boards - how did they measure up to the democratic

principles underpinning them? How responsive were boards to the views and needs of their constituents? Who, in fact, governed the schools? They argued for the politicisation of boards, a bargaining style of governance that involved the participants equally, and argued against what they perceived as the professional dominance of the system.

Zeigler and Tucker (1978) returned to the representative nature of boards using the concept of board responsiveness - their form of responsiveness, whether congruent or representational, differed essentially in how the policy-making process took account of constituent's preferences. Instead of being representative of community views at the level of the board, boards, in their view, tended to legitimise and represent the views of the professionals to the community. Kerr (1964) found that the board served primarily as an agency for legitimisation, "rubber-stamping" policies proposed by the professionals more than developing their own policies. He found that board members were socialised into a board culture supportive of the professional and which contributed to a high level of professional control.

Bailey (1965) and Becker (1970) concluded that the operational processes of boards tended to be either "arena/secular" or "elite/sacred", modes of operation that reflected their relationship with their constituent groups. Mann (1985) described that relationship in terms of orientation. The board member acted either as a trustee or delegate, with the delegate acting primarily as representative of his/her constituents and the trustee acting primarily on behalf of the institution. The concept of accountability of boards to their constituents is at the heart of the district board studies in the 1970s. A contrary view, summed up by Boyd (1976), argued for a sacred board culture which valued professional expertise, and an apolitical, conflict-free style of meeting that was supportive of the administration. Boyd argued that boards were not professionally dominated and should not be politicised. The concepts and categories developed in theses studies are reflected in the studies identified in the other systems.

The earlier literature, in the main based in the United States and the United Kingdom, related to boards in relatively centralised, hierarchical and bureaucratic systems on the threshold of change. The more recent literature across all the jurisdictions recognises change as a primary characteristic of the environment of boards. Despite the contextual and content differences, the studies on school boards of governors, school-based councils, and boards of management substantially reflect similar concerns and concepts. Participative decision-making is the centrepiece of the revised board/council

strategy. This form of decision-making implies that the people involved with schools administrators, teachers and parents - need to make a fundamental change in how they function in relation to one another. It involves a change in their roles and relationships. As a consequence, the context and the accepted practices of educational management are changing rapidly as traditional routine practices and systems are challenged and revised. The studies suggest that a fundamental problem with achieving democratic participation in educational governance is one of the management of the change process in what is a complex matrix of needs and influences. Mandating change is no guarantee that it will occur. Change is a process, not an event (Hall and Galluzzo. 1991).

Participative decision-making also implies responsibility and real authority. The move towards boards of management and school councils is part of a strategy to expand the responsibility and authority of the local school for the improvement of school performance, and, ideally, a mechanism for the introduction of a collaborative approach to improving schools in response to community needs. Guthrie and Reed (1986) argued that participation of itself is no substitute for a real role and influence. It is only when groups or individuals believe that there is the possibility for them to have real influence through their participation, not just a token or passive involvement, that participation is valued, feelings of satisfaction nurtured, creativity encouraged and commitment to decisions strengthened. Input into and authority to make decisions are not the same. Tokenism, can lead to participant frustration and a reversion to tradition (Malen et al. 1989). To ensure their effectiveness, boards of management and councils need to focus on important issues and use their time creatively and wisely. Their place in the educational governance framework and their relationship to other structures needs to be clearly defined. Effective councils, it is suggested, are characterised by diversity, open communication, and accountability in the context of real authority and responsibility for matters of substance. At the same time, despite the emphasis on participation, devolved responsibilities and local accountability, central authorities have retained pre-eminent authority in the key areas of resources - finances, staffing, and curriculum.

Giving parents in particular a role in school decision-making was a strategy adopted in most jurisdictions as a means of making schools more responsive to local needs. The literature suggests that the strategy is problematic. There is reluctance among many parents to get involved with their schools, particularly at the level of management. School decision-making, including financial decision-making, continues to be dominated by the principals (Levacic, 1995; Coe et al. 1995; Maychell, 1994). Most parents preferred to be involved with their children's learning (Epstein,

1995). Parental involvement to be successful needs more than the existence of a structure.

The review suggests that the act of dismantling central structures is not by itself sufficient to stimulate innovation and participation at the level of the local school management. There are barriers to be addressed such as traditional dependencies within the system and the school, ingrained administrative systems, regulations, and the cultural and institutional ethos of schooling. Effective councils are difficult to create, since members must shift roles, live with compromises, and invest time, energy, and knowledge. Participants on school councils appear to be hesitant to challenge traditional norms and roles. Some seem reluctant to exercise the authority they have been given, or appear to lack the resources to accept the challenge, while others seek to expand their role. The role of the principal is often presented as a prime determinant of the level of activity of the boards and their focus. Unless principals are willing to share their authority, traditional power relationships may simply be perpetuated. A significant obstacle facing local boards of management would appear to relate to how they can overcome the *status quo* through encouraging the educational professionals to share their authority and expertise, and the parents to share in the responsibility for deciding school policy.

The enthusiasm among teachers and parents for the process appears to be related to the level of involvement allowed to them or assumed by them, and the centrality and relevance of the decisions over which they have authority. Becoming a fully functioning member of a board, becoming informed and influential in that capacity, takes time and requires a strong level of support in various forms, among them training, structural support, monitoring of council activities. The literature indicates that the continued effectiveness of the boards requires on-going membership training, and the skilful and committed participation of their membership in the democratic process.

The focus of this study is on the effectiveness of the board of management from the perspective of the stakeholders - trustees, parents and teachers - who currently form these boards, and the school principal who is responsible for the implementation of board policy and the day-to-day management of the school. This chapter has attempted to review a range of literature sourced in the United States, Canada and Australia, the United Kingdom and Ireland – the systems discussed in chapter two of this study. It has extrapolated from the studies a range of models of board operations, and discussed the nature of the school as an organisation. In its conclusions, drawing on both chapters two and three, it has pointed to a range of central themes that indicate aspects or attributes of effective board

governance based on generally similar reform principles. Among these themes are the board's understanding of its role in the context of the school and in the macro-context of educational management, its representative nature, its responsiveness to its stakeholders, the legitimacy of its powers, its orientation, its accountability, its leadership role, relationships on the board, the board's own self-management and decision-making procedures, the culture of the board and its support for its members. There is relatedness and a degree of overlap between all of these themes. They will become the core of the framework for this study. The following chapter will set out the role and structures of the boards of management in the voluntary secondary and community schools in Ireland. It will discuss the concept of effectiveness in relation to board effectiveness. In addition to the concept of effectiveness, it will discuss the themes subsidiary to the main issue of this study identified in the current chapter, and which are relevant in the context of the roles being played by boards operating as instruments of participatory democracy.

CHAPTER FOUR

BOARDS OF MANAGEMENT AND BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

The focus of this study is on the effectiveness of the boards of management as established and functioning in voluntary secondary and community schools in Ireland. The empirical study will be conducted among members of these boards. Chapters two and three identified and discussed a range of literature relating to the macro and micro-contexts of local school governance. This chapter is set out in five sections. Section one outlines the particular context in which the boards of management developed in Ireland, initially in the community and comprehensive schools, and then in the voluntary secondary schools. The board as proposed was an innovation in Irish educational management. Section two describes the role and structures of these boards as set out in their Deeds of Trust and Articles and Instruments of Management. The responsibilities of the boards are generally similar in both types of school, though there are significant structural differences. The particular focus of the study relates to their perceived effectiveness as corporate management vehicles. Section three goes on to discuss the concept of organisational effectiveness in general. It relates it to the particular context of the board of management. Based on the review of the literature relating to effectiveness, it suggests a model for the evaluation of board effectiveness. It points to a multidimensional definition of effectiveness that recognises the interest-stance of the person involved – a definition that includes the perception of at least the primary interest groups. Drawing on the literature set out in chapters two and three, section four discusses the range of concepts and issues relating to the role of the board, and the relationships and processes on the board, identified in the conclusion to chapter three. Among these are the role the boards play, their orientation, their responsiveness to their constituent groups, their management processes, their commitment to their own development. These areas form the framework of issues that will be addressed in the empirical study. Section five concludes the chapter.

4.1 THE CONTEXT

This section will set out briefly the context in which the boards of management were set up in the community and voluntary secondary sectors, and their role in each of the sectors.

The voluntary secondary schools have a long history going back beyond the Intermediate Education Act of 1878, which gave them their current form. In Ireland, they make up the majority of the schools

curricular pattern of Irish secondary schools was firmly fixed within the humanist grammarschool tradition ... the examination introduced ... copper-fastened the grammar school approach by allotting greater marks and rewards to the core subjects of that tradition ... courses pursued were linked to the requirements of traditional university study, careers in the church and in the professions but did little to orient students towards careers in agriculture, industry and commerce.

Intermediate education adopted a high academic and literary character, determined to a large extent by the external examination system. The schools were private institutions. Traditionally hierarchical in management structure, the majority of them were run as denominational schools under the control of the churches or church related bodies, particularly the Roman Catholic Church. History and tradition had served to make the sector cautious of public interventions.

Randles (1976, p.24) observes that prior to the mid-1960s there was little pressure for revision of the educational system from within the ranks of management or teachers in secondary schools. The "Investment in Education" report published in 1966, was destined to have a major impact on Irish education. It focused a developing debate, which was calling "for a reassessment of the educational system and for some - largely undefined - changes." (Randles, 1976, p.18). Issues relating to the needs of the economy, equality of opportunity, demands that schools facilitate a greater and more diverse intake of pupils from the whole spectrum of backgrounds in society formed a substantial part of that debate. These issues had a relevance to an Ireland where emigration, rural depopulation, and unemployment underlined the weakness of the economy and the philosophy of "self sufficiency." The education debate abroad also had an influence (Mungovan, 1994, p.15). A policy switch, from protectionism to an acceptance of foreign investment to boost economic expansion, challenged traditional values in many areas of Irish society including education and accelerated the debate.

resources, the suitability of the curriculum being offered in Irish schools in the context of mass education to meet social and economic needs, the promotion of educational opportunity, and the democratisation of education in both content and structure. Social equality and democratisation were values to be realised. In this context, two new but related types of schools, comprehensive schools and community schools, were introduced. A particular and innovative feature of these schools was their management structure, centred on a board rather than an individual manager. In the form proposed, the board of management was an innovation in Irish educational management, though the concept was well established in a few Irish schools and in the United Kingdom in the form of the boards of governors.

4.2 MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

The debate surrounding the management structures of the community schools based on a board of management, and the terms of the Deed of Trust under which the schools were to operate, generated intense controversy (Barry, 1989). Community schools were born out of a concern at Government level about the full and equitable use of available resources, the suitability of the curriculum being offered in existing second level schools in the context of mass education to meet social and economic needs, the promotion of equality of opportunity and the democratisation of education, both in content and structure. The publication of the Community School Document (Department of Education, 1970) prompted a heated debate around issues of the management structure, and the terms of the Deed of Trust. This debate did not reach a conclusion until 1984 when teacher representatives took their place on all community school boards, though the boards themselves came were established in new community schools from 1972. In the secondary schools, the suggestion that their religious managers might share management with lay people was mooted in 1973 in the context of a report relating to the future involvement of Roman Catholic religious in education (CMRS, 1973). After twelve years of discussions and negotiations, mainly between the teacher unions and the religious authorities with responsibility for the schools, a board of management was accepted in 1985 (O'Flaherty, 1992, pp.93-111). The Council of Managers of Catholic Secondary Schools (1985, p.5) stated that

the introduction of the Board of Management represents a new perception of education as a community enterprise and of the school as a community in itself, made up of management, teachers, parents and pupils united in a common purpose and all working together to achieve the best possible fulfilment of their aims and expectations.

Voluntary secondary schools were not obliged to establish boards in their schools and many of the schools continue to operate without boards of management. Duffy (1996), then the General Secretary of Association of Managers of Catholic Secondary Schools (AMCSS), acknowledged that the issues that generated intense controversy at the time had proved in practice to be non-issues.

In most of the jurisdictions surveyed in chapter two, the role and functions of boards are determined, or are in the process of being determined by legislation. It is difficult to list or classify precisely all the functions and responsibilities of these boards as they vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In the Irish context a statutory framework for boards of management has been included in the Education Act (Ireland) (1998). In the context of the Education Act, the community school board of management currently draws its authority from a Deed of Trust (DTC) and an Instrument (IMC) and

Articles of Management (AMC). In the voluntary secondary schools, the authority of boards is rooted in Articles of Management (AMS) and attached schedules. In both sectors, these are compromise documents agreed after a negotiation that at times was difficult. The Minister and the Trustees have reserved powers, including the ultimate power to dissolve the board. The boards functioned in the context of these documents, and in the context of significant controls over the schools exercised centrally by the Department of Education. At the time this study was conducted, the Education Act (Ireland) (1998) was not enacted.

In the case of the community schools, the premises and grounds are vested in the Minister for Education and demised by the Minister to Trustees. Dolan (1981, p. 138) states that a Trust is "the relationship which exists when one person, called a trustee, is compelled by law to hold a property for the benefit of other persons, called beneficiaries, or for objects permitted by law, so that the real benefit accrues to those beneficiaries." The duty of the trustee is to administer the trust . The Trustees undertake to apply the resources of the Trust, in accordance with the terms of the Deed of Trust Model Lease (DTML), "for the purposes which are in keeping with the declared terms and objects of the Scheme" (DTML, 5) and they covenant with the Minister "...duly, diligently and faithfully to execute and perform all the Trusts." (DTML, 6). The trustees appointed for the schools make a contribution to the cost of the school, based on a standard percentage of that cost. All subsequent recurrent costs, both current and capital, are borne by the Department of Education.

The concept of a trust applies equally to the voluntary secondary schools that were founded for a particular purpose and in pursuit of which the property of the school is held in "trust." The voluntary secondary school is in the legal ownership of its trustees usually. The trustees are responsible for the school premises and the ethos of the school. As in the case of Trustees in the community schools, who hold the school and its assets in trust for the purposes of the school, on the terms and conditions of the Deed of Trust (DTML, Section 2), the Trustees of the voluntary secondary school likewise "have a fiduciary relationship towards other persons (beneficiaries) and are obliged to honour the trust." (CORI, 1996, p. 5). The board in the secondary school is mandated to "enter and use the school premises for the purpose of management and administration of the school during such periods as shall be determined by the said Trustees" (AMS, 2). It is to conduct, manage and financially administer the school "subject to the general supervision and control of the Trustees for the time being" (AMS, 1). The school is to be conducted in accordance with the religious and educational philosophy of the trustees as set out in a second schedule of the Articles, and in accordance with the Rules and Regulations of the Department of Education.

In the community school the Deed of Trust has two schedules - an Instrument of Management and Articles of Management. The Instrument of Management sets out the membership of the Board of Management, the term of office, the frequency of meetings, among other matters. The Community School board is appointed for a three-year period. It has ten members - six trustee nominees, two parents and two teachers with a chairperson elected from among the Board's membership. The authority to manage the school on behalf of the Trustees is delegated through the Articles of Management. The Articles of Management outline the powers, duties and responsibilities of the Board. The structure of the voluntary secondary board is generally similar, though the board is smaller. The secondary school board is appointed for a three-year period. It consists of eight members - four by nomination of the Trustees, two elected parents and two elected teacher members. The Trustees appoint the Chairperson.

In both sectors, the Boards are the vehicles through which the trustees meet their obligations to the school. On both boards, the Principal of the school is entitled to attend as a non-voting member and as Secretary in the voluntary secondary board. He/she may be Secretary to the Community School board. On both boards the majority control rests with the trustees, a position argued primarily on the basis of their position as guarantors of the trust on which the school is based. In the secondary school board, the trustee representation is potentially a more cohesive group than the community school board since one trustee - the owner of the school, usually nominates them. In the case of the community school board, there will normally be at least two trustee groups.

The board of the Community School is "responsible for the government and direction of the school subject to the provisions of the First and Second Schedules" to the Deed of Trust. The school is

established with the object of providing a comprehensive system of post-primary education open to all the children of the community, combining instruction in academic and practical subjects, and ongoing education for persons living at or near (the school) and generally for the purpose of contributing towards the spiritual, moral, mental and physical well-being and development of the said Community... (DTML, 4).

The board has responsibilities with regard to its own smooth functioning according to set procedures, to the school programme, the pupils, the parents, the Department of Education and the trustees of the school and for furnishing reports and returns as specified in the Articles of Management. It is responsible for the general direction of the conduct and curriculum of the school. It is to ensure that there is religious worship and instruction in the school and that the general and specific ethos of the school is maintained. It has specific responsibilities in relation to finance, premises and equipment,

selection and appointment of staff, general organisation, and organisation of the curriculum. It is responsible for the preparation of the financial estimates, the administration of a "School Fund" established and maintained by the Minister for the purposes prescribed and according to the regulations of the Minister. It is also responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the school premises and equipment, for which it is accountable, out of moneys provided by the Minister. The board is the employer of the staff of the school. It has the same powers and responsibilities as any employer in respect of its employees, except that it does not negotiate their conditions of employment. The Minister, on behalf of the board, pays all the staff authorised for the school by his/her Department, either directly from Department funds, or indirectly through the budget allocated to the school. The appointment of staff is substantially circumscribed through Department of Education and Science regulations and the use of an interview committee that has a majority representation of trustee interests. The community school Deed of Trust puts an obligation on the board to respond to the wider educational needs of the community. The Deed and its attached schedules are general documents and lack specific procedures for the operation of the school. The board exercises its general responsibilities subject to the provisions, determinations, and approvals of the Minister for Education and Science, or conditions laid down by him/her through general policy, statutory control, and budgetary allocations.

The responsibilities of the voluntary secondary boards are along generally similar lines. It is the responsibility of the board to ensure that the school is properly administered. It is entrusted "with the responsibility of ensuring that the curriculum of the school is in accordance with the religious and educational criteria enunciated by the trustees." (CMCSS, 1991, p.12). As in the case of the community school board, its role is specified primarily in terms of responsibilities (CMCSS, 1991, pp. 15 -17). These are set out under six heads - with regard to finance, staff, pupils, parents, the Department of Education and trustees. Its financial duties are specified as the maintenance and care of the school, its grounds and facilities; the administration of moneys from whatever source within limits determined by the trustees; the purchase of insurance; fund-raising, if it is necessary; decisions about use of school premises by outside groups subject to particular provisions made by the trustees; ensuring that school accounts are prepared and audited. In relation to staff, the responsibility of the board covers the appointments process, adherence to employment law, staff promotions in accordance with the terms agreed between the teacher unions and the Joint Managerial Body for Secondary Schools, adjudicating complaints, sanctioning leave of absences, terminating contracts of employment subject to agreed procedures, and compliance with the Health, Safety and Welfare at Work legislation. Ongoing formation of staff, and consultation and communication between management and staff, falls within the ambit of the board. With regard to pupils, the board lays

down enrolment policies in accordance with the philosophy of the trustees, and is ultimately responsible in discipline issues where expulsion of a pupil is being considered. The board "must devise and maintain proper channels of communication with parents of all pupils" and "ensure that the school is being run in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Department of Education." All actions and decisions must be taken in the context of the ethos laid down by the Trustees in pursuance of a policy that supports that ethos.

Neither community nor voluntary secondary boards may exceed authorised expenditures. The central control of financial and other resources impacts on the level of control that can be exercised by boards. The Department operates a central control through national policies, statutory instruments, circular letters which interpret policy, the inspection system, day-to-day routine contact with the schools, the curriculum and examination systems, and the central control of resources. Specific central control is exercised over the amount of budgets, the staffing of the schools and financial allocations for buildings and other capital projects. Current expenditure is allocated to community schools through a budget. In the case of the voluntary secondary school boards, a grant is provided on the basis of a per capita allowance based on enrolment. The Department has control of central funding for capital projects. In both the community and voluntary secondary sectors, the general thrust of board operations appears to be management/administrative. This is underlined in the case of the voluntary secondary board by the "Sample Agenda" proposed for a board meeting (CMCSS, p.25-26). Correspondence, report of finance sub-committee on Silver Circle Draw, ratification of a temporary appointment, notification from the teacher union, and the principal's report are the substantive items for consideration. The principal's report "gives the principal the opportunity to bring the board up-to-date on school happenings - examinations, functions, games, competitions... (and)...matters such as accidents, discipline," and "matters on which it will be required to take action of one sort or another."

In both the voluntary secondary and community schools, the responsibilities of the board are circumscribed by such factors as the control vested in the principal over the internal organisation, management and discipline of the school, the ethos of the school set down by the trustees, the role of the Department of Education, and, to some extent at least, public opinion. The direct role of the Minister and the trustees is underlined in the community school board, while the role of the trustee is the main focus in the voluntary secondary school board, apparently following the ownership of the school. The orientation of the voluntary school board is strongly denominational in support of a religious ethos, while in the community school, though the ethos of the trustees in stressed and the provision of religious education is mandated, its trust appears to be more civic and social rather than

religious. In the voluntary schools, recruitment of staff is subject to a teacher deployment panel system. Nowhere in the governing documents in either sector is there any specific reference to policy development, planning, goals, objectives, accountability for any aspect of school operations other than ethos and day-to-day administration, particularly related to finance, though they are implied in particular areas of the board's responsibilities such as enrolment. In both sectors the boards have legal responsibilities.

The business of the boards is transacted at board meetings. The stipulation that board meetings are confidential within the terms of their governing documents and that board members are described as nominees in both sectors suggests that they are expected to serve the broad interests of the school rather than sectional interests. The status of board members is as nominees rather than as representatives or delegates of their nominating groups. Whether board members see their role as nominees or as representatives is an issue of interest to this study and will be addressed in the empirical study.

The role of the chairperson of the board varies in the two sectors under discussion. In the case of the community school board, the chairperson is elected annually from among the members of the board, without any determination on the number of times he/she may be elected as long as he/she remains a member of the board. The chairperson may be from any category of nominee - parent, teacher, trustee nominee, though the trustee nominees, having majority membership of the board, can, at least technically determine who becomes chairperson. In the voluntary secondary board, he/she is appointed by the trustees, usually for the duration of the life of the board. In the event of a tied vote, he/she has a casting vote. The role of the chairperson and his/her relationship to the principal is stressed. He/she is appointed by the trustees and ratified by the board. The duties of the chairperson relate to board meetings - convening, agenda setting, presiding, maintaining a regular but not intrusive presence in the school, being a channel of communication between the trustees and the board, and acting as the legal representative of the board. It is a role similar to that of manager of the board. He/she is the formal liaison between the trustees of the school and the school management, and in that capacity possesses a great deal of moral and symbolic authority in addition to his/her formal authority. The role of chairperson gets summary mention in the Community School Deed of Trust. This has practical implications for the role of the school principal, who is in most cases the board secretary, and who may have to assume responsibility for decisions and problem resolution, especially between meetings. Birley (1970, p.130) suggests that the personality of the chairperson, the view he/she takes of the role, and the skill with which it is executed is most important since the "power of a determined, ambitious and skilful chairman is very considerable

indeed."

It is the board's duty to make sure that the school is properly administered. The administrative arm of the board is the principal, who is accountable to the board. The board has a role in monitoring how the administration is functioning and how well the purposes of the school are being achieved.

In both sectors the Board employs the principal. As an employee, he /she must obey the employer's lawful and reasonable direction. The principal acts under its direction and the provisions of the articles of management. He/she ensures that management functions are fulfilled in the day-to-day running of the school. His/her authority is delegated, though the Deed of Trust grants him/her an *ex officio* responsibility for the internal administration of the school. The roles of the principal and the board are not mutually exclusive in that the principal is both a board member and an employee of the board. In general terms, the responsibilities of the principal are similar in the two sectors, though in the secondary sector the relationship and responsibilities are currently more fully developed contractually than in the community sector. In the community sector no formal general contracts in particular schools. In both sectors the principal can act as secretary to the board and in that capacity he/she "has a crucial role in ensuring that it functions effectively." (CORI, 1986, p. 12). A good working relationship between the board and the principal is recognised in the literature as important for the effectiveness of the board.

In broad terms the role and responsibility of the boards of management in both sectors fall into the general pattern for school boards and councils in other jurisdictions. Primary among these is the legal role of a board to maintain the integrity of the trust on which the school rests. It safeguards the mission of the school on behalf of its owners and exists to ensure that the purposes set for the school are maintained. It promotes the well being of the school. It has responsibility within its delegated mandate for the implementation of the directional vision and priorities for the school, the monitoring of the vision and ongoing management planning. The directional vision and priorities provide the governing principles for the school, set a framework for carrying out its mission, and form the context for planning. The board develops, within the parameters of its mandate, policy and plans for enrolment, staffing, physical facilities and their use, finance and curriculum resources, curriculum, school programmes and any other aspect which affects the school and its future. Board policies and plans cannot be contrary to the provisions - rules, regulations, and directives - of the Department of Education and Science or the trust as specified by the trustees. The financial wellbeing of the institution and the active involvement of the boards in monitoring this aspect of the school are stressed in both sectors.

The board is responsible for its own smooth running according to procedures set down for it in its governing documents. It exercises its responsibilities subject to the provisions, determinations, and approvals of the Minister for Education and Science, or conditions laid down by him/her through general policy, statutory control and budgetary allocations. The maintenance of good relationships and clarity of roles on the board, between the board and administration and with the many elements in the community served by the school would seem to be an important part of the task of an effective board. Boards are accountable for their performance and if they fail, they can be dismissed. This level of accountability implies that boards have a significant degree of discretion in how they exercise their delegated authority, and that they are accountable for their stewardship.

Through the boards the traditional managers or trustees have taken teachers and parents into a new management partnership. According to Burke (1992, p.44), in this partnership all interest groups (stakeholders) need to develop a clear, broader concept of their future roles in order to overcome persisting attitudes and loyalties to previous traditions, styles, and routines of a centralised school systems. Once constituted as a board, each member should hold equal status with every other member, since only in its corporateness does the board assume its legal role. Through the board structures, the concerns of identified stakeholders can be represented at board level and allowed to influence decision-making and modify strategic planning which will "ensure **effective educational management and provision** in a school." (Department of Education, 1995, p. 146, bolded in original).

The definition of the role of the board of management in the Education Act (Ireland) (1998), though developed and enhanced particularly in regard to aspects of accountability and democratic values, does not appear to differ in essence from that proposed for it in the current governing documents in both sectors. According to the Act, it shall be the duty of the Board to manage the school on behalf of the patron and for the benefit of the students and their parents. It is to provide or cause to be provided an appropriate education for each student at the school for which the board has responsibility. In carrying out its functions a board, according to the Act, is to act in accordance with the policies determined by the Minister, uphold the characteristic spirit (ethos) of the school, consult with and keep the patron informed of decisions and proposals of the board, in the terms of the White Paper, is "to provide a management and support structure which will enable the principal and staff to achieve the aims and objectives of the school...ensure the accountability of the school ... carry out

its functions within the overall framework determined by the patrons/trustees/ owners/governors ... and the Department of Education." (Department of Education, 1995, p.146).

Sheehan (1990, p. 13ff) describes four types of board found in the governance literature in the United States - jurisdictional, limited, consultative, and regulatory. Jurisdictional boards legislate and control and have final authority and total jurisdiction. Boards with limited jurisdiction have jurisdictional power limited to certain areas. Consultative boards operate in the policy-making process by formulating and adapting, but never enacting policy. The constituting authority establishes those areas where the board is to be consulted. Regulatory boards enact or use existing rules and regulations to govern the operation of their institutions. According to Sheehan, regulatory boards are considered administrative rather than policy-making or consultative. She puts public school boards in the United States into this category. Applied to the voluntary secondary and community school boards, it appears that their mandate generally fits this category. They do not have authority to change the philosophy of education or to formulate policies that are not consistent with their trust. Board policies cannot be contrary to the provisions of the trustees or the Department of Education and Science. The trustees in the voluntary secondary schools explicitly reserve powers over the philosophy and mission of the school, approval to incur budget deficits, ownership of the school property. The boards are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school in the context of the criteria laid down by the trustees. The trustees, through their majority representation on the boards in both sectors, have the technical ability to ensure that their criteria are met. The minimalist definition of their role set out in administrative terms in the governing documents suggests that they are primarily management bodies. This does not exclude a responsibility for policy, or for the strategic management of the school.

Through the boards, the trustees have put in place what are effectively stakeholder management tools. Weiss (1995), arguing from within the perspective of a capitalist framework, strongly critiqued the stakeholder approach to organisation. He uses ownership as the determining value, and its downstream responsibilities as the basis for his position. Trustees also use ownership and the responsibilities of ownership as a justification for majority control of boards of management. In both the voluntary secondary and community school boards there are in-built majorities in favour of the trustees, and a requirement that trustee nominees will support a common trustee interest. From the perspective of the religious trustees, ownership in itself is not an absolute value provided the responsibilities of the trust attached to that ownership are satisfied (CORI, 1996). How this can be done in practice with denominational schools in the context of a secular social vision remains an issue.

As outlined in this section, the voluntary secondary and the community school boards comprise nominees of three constituency groups. They are expected to satisfy the expectations and be vehicles for the interests of three principal groups: (a) trustees, (b) parents and (c) staff. In doing so, boards must respond in their operations to the particular interests of each of the groups. They are expected to respond to many concerns and expectations, among them trustee concerns about ethos, purpose and viability; parental expectations that the board will respond to their conceptions of what constitutes a good school; and the professional concerns, interests and values of staff. In addition, there is the context of policy within which the board operates, determined by the Department of Education and Science and embodied in regulations and curricula, and which has its own in-built definition of effectiveness. The following section will discuss the concept of effectiveness and will attempt to relate it to the circumstances of the board of management.

4.3 EFFECTIVENESS

Coulsen-Thomas (1993, p. 134) describes an effective board as one that

operates effectively as a team in the discharge of its collective duties, responsibilities and accountabilities. The composition of a board, and the tone, "atmosphere", dynamics, extent of openness, processes, etc. of the boardroom could all constitute *prima facie* evidence of board effectiveness.

Other definitions offered by scholars such as Reynolds (1980) and Duke and Imber (1985) set out effectiveness almost totally in performance terms. At one level, effectiveness understood in terms of the extent to which a service achieves its objectives seems to be a reasonably simple concept. It means analysing the actual results of a particular activity and comparing them with the intended results. Immediately difficulties arise in determining the intended as well as the actual results, particularly in services where the inputs and outputs behind the results are not readily quantifiable. This may be the case with services such as education or health that are difficult to define in operational terms, given the wide range of possible factors that may influence them and their human focus. It is not surprising that the evaluation of effectiveness in organisational terms has been the focus of considerable discussion and research. Yet, there appears to be little agreement on what constitutes effectiveness. Hannan and Freeman (1977) suggest that the term as a scientific concept be abandoned entirely. They suggest that effectiveness is more meaningful if it is used as a general description of a particular state of affairs without reference to generally agreed measurements. Connolly et al. (1980, p. 211) argue that "current approaches to organisational effectiveness are conceptually conflicting and empirically arid ... handicapped by a desire to produce a single

effectiveness statement about any given organisation." Cameron (1986) acknowledges the lack of agreement around the concept of effectiveness. She argues that the concept is central to and cannot be ignored in organisational theory and research. Hammer (1993) agrees that there is considerable empirical confusion about the measurements of organisational effectiveness.

Cameron (1981, pp. 25ff.), based on a review of the literature, suggested that there are four major models for organisational effectiveness: goal model, systems-resource model, process model, and ecological or participant satisfaction model. There is a general correspondence between these approaches and the models of organisation outlined by Chait and Taylor (1987). They describe five models - organised anarchy, mechanistic, humanistic, political and resource dependent - and discuss the significance of each concept for board assessment. The goal model of effectiveness appears to fit the mechanistic model of organisation. This approach defines effectiveness as the extent to which the organisation accomplishes its goals. Have the goals for the board been attained? The systems resource model focuses on the ability of an organisation to obtain needed resources and reflects the resource dependent model described by Chait and Taylor. In the process model, effectiveness is equated with internal organisational health, efficiency, or smooth internal processes and procedures. It has elements of the humanistic approach of Chait and Taylor - have the negotiated goals for the organisation been achieved? The ecological or participant satisfaction model suggests the political approach of Chait and Taylor. It views effectiveness "in terms of the degree to which the needs and expectations of strategic constituencies are met by the organization (Cameron, 1981, p.26)."

Zammuto (1982), based on a sampling of definitions of organisational effectiveness from frequently cited articles, arrived at a range of approaches similar to those of Cameron. He stated (p.22) "that organizational effectiveness has been defined as the attainment of goals, goal attainment without imposing strains on the organizational system, exploitation of the organization's environment for resources, and in terms of meeting criteria set by multiple constituencies of an organization." Steers (1991) state a similar position. He defines organisational effectiveness "in terms of an organization's ability to acquire and efficiently use available resources to achieve specific goals."(p.302). He identifies four primary criteria for evaluating the extent to which an organisation is effective - goal accomplishment, its ability to acquire resources, its internal processes, and its ability to satisfy key constituencies or stakeholders (p. 304). These translate into four questions:

- Is the organisation doing what it set out to do?
- Has it the ability to acquire the resources needed for it to accomplish its mission?

- Has it healthy internal processes that contribute to the smooth running of the organisation such as efficient information flow, employee trust and loyalty, and low inter-group conflict?
- Are the demands and interests of the key constituencies or stakeholders being met and are they satisfied with their relationship with the organisation?

Tomkins (1987, p. 55) differentiates two broad approaches in the literature related to effectiveness - the "scientific approach" which emphasises performance indicators and the "naturalistic approach" which does not purport to measure effectiveness in "any unique or neutral way," but intends to facilitate an understanding of the situation faced. Following Guba and Lincoln (1981), Tomkins (pp. 54-55) proposes a pragmatic concept of effectiveness which "eschews trying to develop philosophical meanings of effectiveness" and which focuses on specific concerns. This approach finds an echo in that of Holland, Chait and Taylor (1989) in their effort to go beyond descriptions of *what* a board does, to systematically gather and test empirically "*how* a board goes about these purposes and what competencies differentiate more effective from less effective ones" (p. 437).

Holland, Chait and Taylor (1989) addressed the effectiveness of the role of governing boards in the field of private sector higher education in the United States. In a conclusion that has echoes of the models described by Cameron (1981) and Chait and Taylor (1987), they identified six board competencies and specified behavioural indicators for each competency that systematically differentiated highly effective boards from less effective ones. The six competencies include the following: the ability to understand institutional context - the culture and norms of the board; to build the educational dimension or the capacity for learning of the board through ensuring that board members are well informed about the institution and the role of the board; to nurture the interpersonal dimension of the board, recognising the complexity of the issues to be dealt with and respecting and guarding the integrity of the governance process; to accept the political dimension of the board in building healthy relationships among the key constituencies; to envision and shape institutional direction - the strategic dimension.

Hammer and Wazeter (1993, unpaginated electronic document) draw together many of the elements identified by Cameron, Chait and Taylor and Steers in a model for assessing organisational effectiveness. This model, they argue, should include three areas:

• the organisation's goals, what it is that the organisation wants to accomplish;

- the influence wielded by the different reference or interest groups on whom the organisation is dependent on the identification of those goals;
- the effects of environmental constraints of goal attainment.

The model should accommodate different definitions of organisational effectiveness held by individuals and groups, related to their different views on what the organisation should accomplish, and their evaluation of how it responds to their demands. What effectiveness is, in board terms, may depend very much on the interests of those asked to define it. The dimensions of effectiveness may change with time and circumstances depending on issues and may relate also to the stage of development of the organisation. The model should be capable of including conflicting dimensions of effectiveness. Since organisations often have goals that differ in their strategic importance, the model should reflect their relative importance at a given time. A further requirement is that the constraints under which the organisation operates be identified. Connolly et al. (1980, p. 211), in proposing a "multiple-constituency" approach which explicitly assumes that "an organisation's different constituencies will form different assessments of its effectiveness", appear to support this pragmatic approach to understanding effectiveness.

Different models and sets of indicators are being used in different circumstances and according to how organisations are viewed conceptually. Goodman and Pennings (1980, p. 191) state that the "conceptualization of organizational effectiveness must be preceded by an explicit conceptualization of the organization." Each of the organizational perspectives leads to different definitions of organizational effectiveness." Cameron (1981) suggests that the appropriate model depends on the organisation's domain. Organisational domains "generally refer to the population served, the technology employed and the services rendered by the organization (p.27)." She proposes that the ecological model is the most applicable when there are multiple domains and obscure outcomes, and the goal model is most applicable where domains are narrowly defined and the outcomes are easily identifiable. According to Hitt (1988, p.31), the system resource and process models "although used sparingly in organisational research, the goal model is quite commonly used in managerial practice.

Heffron (1989) states that the goal-attainment approach, rooted in the concept of the rational organisation, can be a valid way of assessing organisational effectiveness only where there are measurable goals and cause-effect relationships between actions and their results which can be identified. There must be clarity of goals and output measures must be present. Where these conditions apply, the goal-attainment approach seems appropriate. In other circumstances, the goal-

attainment approach, with its emphasis on efficiency and measures of outcomes, may give a limited picture of effectiveness. How effectiveness is understood or perceived may be a factor of location, related to what is expected in the context of the particular organisation and how this organisation sees itself. The same should hold for board effectiveness.

There is wide acknowledgement that attempts to apply an effectiveness approach to organisations are fraught with conceptual and practical difficulties. For what is essentially exploratory research in an educational context, and in the context of boards of management in particular, where narrow goals are not defined, the goal-attainment approach, of itself, would not appear to be useful. Simkins (1994, p.25) reflects this when he states that the concept of effectiveness in the context of a school "must be considered as both dynamic and contested: dynamic because definitions - whether explicit or implicit - will, for many schools, change over time as governors, managers and classroom teachers attempt to respond to pressures for change arising inside and outside the school; and contested because, for many schools, the various ways in which effectiveness might be defined may not prove easily reconcilable." School boards of management may not fit easily into any one organisational model, and may in practice combine elements of all models.

It is evident that there is a variety of understandings of effectiveness with several areas of overlap between the different positions described by the different authors. All the models appear to measure a board's effectiveness based on the extent to which the board achieves its goals, satisfies it constituent groupings, wins support and resources for its activities - outcomes that are not entirely exclusive of one another. Hrebeniak (1978), Connolly et al. (1980), Zammuto (1982) and Hammer (1993), relating themselves to a broad literature, appear to draw together primarily the goal and ecological approaches in a multiple constituency model as an appropriate methodology for the evaluation of effectiveness. Every organisation has goals, whether they are explicitly stated or informal. In all forms of organisations, goal-attainment is an important determinant for success and achievement. What Cameron (1981) describes as the ecological model of effectiveness is described by Connolly et. al. (1980) as a stakeholder model and is related to the stakeholder or political model of organisations. In this approach, the organisation is viewed as intersections of multiple influence loops. Each loop, according to Connolly et al. (1980, p. 215), "embraces a constituency which is biased toward the assessment of the organisation's activities in terms of its own exchanges within the loop." Each constituency or interest group interacts with each other and with the organisation, and has particular outcome expectancies that may be in competition with those of other groups. From this perspective, the satisfaction of constituent groups or individuals provides indicators of an organisation's effectiveness in that it indicates the extent to which their needs are satisfied.

Campbell (1977, p. 52) states that "in the end organizational effectiveness is what the relevant parties decide it should be. There is no higher authority to which we can appeal." In terms that reflect Bailey (1965) and Becker (1970), the board may be seen as an arena in which trustees, parents and staff come together, initially from their base as interest groups, to set the goals for the school. The effectiveness of the board will be judged to the extent that they maintain an interest stance, whether that interest is primarily school or sectional, and in terms of the extent to which the board meets their interests. This approach suggests a political model for the board.

At its simplest, the board of management is a vehicle for involving parent and teacher nominees in a partnership with the trustee nominees in the decision-making processes of the school regarding areas of the school that affect them. Professional and lay interests, who may have different perspectives on the work of the board and the school, are brought into a coalition that may be more or less harmonious. It may also be more or less a partnership. Given the diversity of interests and perspectives represented on boards, it might be too much to expect that they are unitary organisations. At best, according to Bacharach and Mundell (1993, p. 430), they are "fragile coalitions..." whose decisions will be "the result of a power struggle between interest groups (p.434)." Boards are not simple or unitary entities. On the boards, board members and groups use strategies "that appeal and depend on relationships with subgroups within the organisation to successfully impose their own logics of action. Whatever unity may appear during interactions with the environment is at best momentary, and at worst a facade." Boards have both macro and micro political dimensions - the politics of interest groups. Bacharach and Mundell (p. 432) describe micropolitics as the "realm wherein different logics of action are negotiated within a specific school... " They suggest that focusing on interest groups is the best way to understand the micropolitical struggles on boards and the logic of board operations. The interest group seems an appropriate unit of analysis in organisational politics. It is taken in this study as a key element in determining the effectiveness of the boards of management.

The question for this study is:

what is the perception of board members as nominees of the primary stakeholders - parents, teachers, trustees - and the school principals on the effectiveness of the board as an instrument of participatory governance?

The study takes as a general and practical definition of effectiveness the degree to which the values and goals for the board of management as a participatory management structure for the local school,

and held by the stakeholders represented on the board, are understood and being achieved. This definition attempts to draw elements of each of the four models described by Cameron and Zammuto - goal, systems resource, process, and ecological or participant satisfaction - but with particular stress on the goal and participant satisfaction models. The plurality of the concept identified in general organisational terms would seem to be equally applicable within the board of management defined as a group of people who co-ordinate their efforts and work together for common goals.

Relating back to the review of the literature set out in chapters two and three, a number of subsidiary issues emerge that are relevant to the question addressed in this study. These issues are also reflected in the Deed of Trust in the Community Schools and the Articles of Management in the Voluntary Secondary Schools. While the Deed of Trust and the Articles of Management are legal statements setting out roles, responsibilities and procedures, they are also statements of a commitment to a set of values and principles that underpin these issues. These are core issues in the framework for this study. They are discussed and developed in the following sections

4.4 ISSUES

Among the central issues relating to board operations emerging from the literature are the role and responsibility of the board particularly in regard to policy, its understanding of its role in the context of the school and in the macro-context of educational management, its orientation, its responsiveness to its stakeholders, the legitimacy of its powers, and its accountability. Responsibility is associated with purpose and accountability. These are associated with decision-making and the form and extent of the participation required of nominees and stakeholders in board processes - its decision-making processes and its own self-management processes. Its exercise of its responsibilities is also a factor of board climate and culture and the relationships on the board, especially the lay/professional relationship and the support for board members. These issues are discussed in the following subsections against the background of a value system that encourages participatory management values such as partnership and collaboration. They are relevant in the context of the roles being played by boards operating as instruments of participatory democracy. There is relatedness and a degree of overlap between all these issues.

4.4.1 POLICY OR ADMINISTRATION

What is the purpose of the board of management – setting or implementing policy or both? Chait et al. (1993, p. 95) identified the strategic dimension of a board's operations, its ability to shape

institutional direction, to focus primarily on organisational priorities - thus reducing a tendency to be diverted by routine or crisis issues, as a key effectiveness dimension of a board's operations. According to this view, which has wide support in the literature, the primary role of the board in whatever context, lies in the area of policy development and strategic planning. The role of the school administration is to administer that policy. Policy and administration are seen as distinct and separate.

According to Danzberger et al. (1992), policy is related to areas such as strategic planning, and setting long and short-term goals and objectives. Ross (1987, p. 5) defined policy as "general rules about what will be done, who will do it and how it will be done." Day-to-day operations are the responsibility of the administration. Drucker (1969), in discussing the nature of government organisations, made a distinction between roles that steer and direct and those that manage and deliver services (p.179). Government should distinguish between the tasks that relate to its control function and the "conducting of government", and should "confine itself to decision and direction." (p. 224). In the context of a developing economy, the need is for "government that governs and not government that does." (p.226). Brodinsky (1977), in the context of boards, made a similar distinction. He stated that policy should be concise, clearly defined, and should assist the chief administrator in effective administration. Policy is a statement of what the board wishes to achieve in the areas for which it has responsibility. Anderson (1983) stated that all board decisions should relate to either policy-making or problem-solving. Policy decisions set out basic principles and set out a course of action for the administrator (p.34). These decisions state the wishes of the board and provide a framework for day-to- day operations of the administration. Ideally, policies reflect the values and wishes of the group. Osborne and Gaebler (1992) argue for the separation of policy from operations along lines similar to Drucker. The most important concern of governments ought to be 'governance", understood in terms of adopting goals and strategies (p. 35). In their view, separating he two areas gives greater capacity to governing agencies to direct. Decisions are freed from the references of those groups who provide the service, and managers are given greater freedom and lexibility in addressing problems.

Drucker and Osborne and Gaebler at macro organisational level, and Brodinsky and Anderson at board level make a distinction between two core activities - policies, which represent direction, and tisks which can be stated objectively and refer to what is to be done. On one level, there seems to be a clear distinction, but despite theoretical clarity there still appears to be a problem. Viewing the board in policy terms to the exclusion of any other role does not appear to equate with the reality of the life of a board. Chait and Taylor (1989) suggested a more complex approach to policy. In the context of a college, they argued for three different levels of policy making. They specified that boards must set governing policies that deal with the fundamental issues of mission and purposes and the questions of values and principles that guide other decisions. Executive policies can be developed usually by the president and administration, while operational policies that govern the day-to-day practices are established within appropriate institutional structures. These distinctions are helpful to a degree, but do not resolve what appears to be the central issue when the two areas are set against one another - the hierarchical relationship between policy and administration and their mutual attraction for people on either side in terms of power and influence. Ledyard (1987, pp. 87-88) found that a significant number of board members saw a role for themselves in management, as distinct from policy. In practice, there seemed to be an attraction for policy-makers to get involved in management and for the manager to get involved in policy. Boards are easily distracted from, or shy away from, the abstract areas of policy development and goal-setting in favour of more tangible and public issues. The attraction for board members was a feeling that they could have greater impact and be more effective at management level than at the level of policy, which was more removed from outcomes. School superintendents in his study, on the other hand, were attracted to policy as a potential area of power and influence.

While it is stated that the primary function of the board is to initiate and develop policy for the school, there is also a regular finding that in practice boards do not initiate policy. Boards are seen to react to policy developed elsewhere rather than to initiate their own. This was a central concern in the studies on school boards in the United States described in Chapter Three. These studies suggested that because of the decision-making culture of boards, which tended towards the "elite-sacred" model, the boards were primarily legitimators rather than originators of policy. This prompts the question - where was the source of board developed policies? Put another way, in terms of the effectiveness of the boards of management - who manages the school? Whose wishes were being implemented? Two issues emerge from the discussion as important - the practical relationship between the board and the school principal.

Ridley (1958) set out the issues in the debate that continues in the literature. He called for the removal of what he saw as the artificial separation of policy-making and administration. Discussing the leadership role of city managers in the United States, he argued that a complete separation between policy and administration was practically impossible. Because of the inherently continuous interaction in the policy process " ... the actual administration of policy may suggest necessary changes to the policy, which in turn requires the review of policy makers" (p.11).

a complex governmental process originating in a variety of public and private sources, conceived and developed by diverse interest groups, publicised pro and con through newspapers and other media, debated and discussed during the legislative process and finally enacted into law. Even here, however, the process does not end. The process continues through the formal and informal development of administrative rules and regulations and their application and modification in practice (p.6).

He stated that for the policy process to succeed, city managers must team up with their councils and be actively involved in the entire process. He proposed a strong political role for public administrators and saw a need for them to acquire appropriate political behaviours. The policy process described by Ridley has some similarities (and some striking dissimilarities) to the educational policy process.

Zimmermann (1978) researched the *de facto* role of the administrator/manager in policy development in local government in Ireland. The Public Services Organisation Review Group (1969) dealing with local government in Ireland, quoted by Zimmerman (1978, p. 486), stated that

in theory, the reserved powers of a council are considerable, leaving the manager with almost entirely administrative functions. In practice, the manager plays a considerable part in establishing policy as well as carrying it out. The council relies on the manager for advice, guidance and help. As a result, the manager's contribution to local policy is considerable.

Zimmerman (1978, p. 498) found that county councillors saw themselves as playing four principal roles - "watchdog" for the ratepayers; conveying the needs of their constituencies to officials and conveying the responses to constituents; being of service to and acting on behalf of their constituents; and representing the views of their constituents in the policy formulation process. He found that, in practice, "... the precise legal allocation of formal powers has become blurred ... by the teamwork approach employed by the typical council and manager." Though they regarded their role in policy-making as important, it was still the last in their four main priorities. Though teamwork is cited as a reason for the blurring of the policy/administration distinction, the implication is that the lacuna in policy was being filled to a significant degree by the administrative arm of the council - manager and staff.

If Ridley's theory on the administrative role of city managers, and Zimmerman's finding on the practice of county councillors is transferred into educational administration, and if the administrative

and policy functions cannot be differentiated in practice as suggested by Zimmerman, it seems reasonable to posit a theoretical base for a role for the school principal in policy and its management. In Ridley's terms

The goal of administration is the most expeditious, economical, and complete achievement of public policy and programs consistent with humane standards. Administration is a vital social process, charged with implementing the desired end of social order; it has the function of assuring social stability by facilitating the orderly change that is desired by society (p.10).

This concept of administration would seem to have the potential to rest easy in an educational setting and within educational structures, which are being asked to be more responsive to the needs of society. In Ridley's perspective, the role of school principals goes beyond the following of prescriptions and mandates from their board or other sources. They ought to be actively involved in the policy development processes because such involvement is part of their role as education providers. While the governing documents in both the community and voluntary secondary boards state that the principal shall control the internal organisation, management and discipline of the school (AMC, 10 and CMCSS, 1985 p. 29), his/her role is primarily administrative. At all times, it is subject to the direction of the board. While Ridley would accept that ultimately this may be necessary, it does not mean that he/she may be formally excluded from policy development. But once a policy has been adopted by a council, "it is the manager's duty, even if he disagrees with that policy, to administer and enforce the policy to the best of his/her ability." (p.45). This broader concept of the administrative role and the actual level of influence enjoyed by administrators are constant themes in the literature on boards.

Self (1977) identified two distinctive processes in public sector decision-making – a political process and an administrative process. Self argued that policy and administration were growing more intertwined in practice within the context of public sector decision-making. The political process dealt with the input of demands, embracing the claims of diverse publics, through the rules of accountability, the control of administrative powers, and the rules for the effective organisation of work and performance. The administrative process translated policies into specific operations (p.17). It dealt with the output of services, moving downwards into specific operations. Influences and decisions were becoming more diffused and in most western democracies, more contacts occurred between the two processes (p.5). Lynn (1987, p.45) asserted that "if public policy is defined as the interpretation of the concrete actions of government, than all the officials whose decisions are necessary for action to occur are properly regarded as policy-makers." St. John (1992, p.96) suggested that "educational practitioners can have a large influence on public policy through the actions they take, especially if those actions result in exemplary practices." First (1992, p. 18) stated that "educational policy making at all levels of the governance system is intertwined with policy making at all the other levels." Since politicians seldom had the substantive knowledge of educational practice to develop meaningful policy proposals, exemplary practices by school administrators could act as sources of policy ideas (p.96). School administrators "should care about educational policy making and their policy-related roles because they have unique contributions to make in the policy arena (p.17). He claimed that only a limited circle of school administrators who preferred the passive and non-political mode of administration persisted in the view that policy and administration were separate. For them, business as usual and their preference for stability, predictability, and comfort far exceeded the expressed needs for quality education. McMullan (1980), writing in the context of private schools in the United States, argued that the heads of these schools should be the initiators of most of the school policies, and that the role of the trustees should be to respond and evaluate these policies. The duty of the board was to monitor the implementation of strategic initiatives, to assess that they were on schedule and producing effective results.

Though the board may be the initiator, policy is often drafted by the administration in consultation with the other stakeholders, and most proposed policies are accepted by the board. Deas (1994, p. 47) suggests that boards, in practice, fulfil their responsibility to set policy by trusting the administration to prepare statements that have the support of the different constituencies and which are consistent with its long-term goals. As monitor, the board is expected to oversee the implementation of its policies and their management. Congar et al. (1998 p.136), writing out of the context of corporate boards, argues that strategy development does not mean that the board is directly responsible for setting strategy as much as it is for ensuring that a strategic planning process is in place, is used, and produces sound choices. Setting strategy, in their view, falls to the chief executive and senior management team. While the task of establishing policy is important, boards take on a range of other functions. The complexity of the policy and administration relationship is reflected in the relationships between the boards of management and their principals. In practice, there is a practical overlap of roles and responsibilities and there are difficulties in setting boundaries between them.

Many factors influence the extent of the role and of the board in the area of policy. Danzberger et al. (1992) identified its responsibility for acquiring its own resources is an important determinant of its general policy and other stances in relation to a school. In their view the obligation of the board to plan for the long term and short term future is commonly overlooked, particularly where boards are dependent on outside support from central government or other sources. The role of the

board is complicated by its place in the macro-governance context of education and the expectations other levels in that structure may determine for or expect of it. A key consideration is that boards should be allowed the latitude to play their proper role by the next tier of governance to which they were responsible.

The school and the board enjoy at most a relative autonomy. On the one hand, the board is an instrument through which the school trustees manage the school according to their particular ethos, and the regulations of the Department of Education and Science. The board, as well as formulating policy and procedures for the effective operation of its school, is itself the subject of policy decisions determined at other levels, which it is expected to implement. Its internal policies and tasks fall within broader policies and are situated within the broader context of the school organisation and its purposes. On the one hand, it is proposed as an instrument of participatory democracy involving the primary stakeholders. On the other hand, it is subject to central policies that limit its capacity to respond to needs expressed to it. The reality of board of management operations may well be that, despite the call for democratic values and action at board level, the real power is not local or democratically controlled. The OECD Report (1995, p.3) stated that in "several countries there is an explicit policy to combine devolution of authority concerning teaching processes with more centralised output-control." A centralised/decentralised distinction "is far too crude to do justice to the many-faceted nature of decision-making." So too may be the traditional definitions of the board's responsibility that limit it to "setting policy" or "monitoring management". But where is the balance struck, by whom and using what process? Where does policy-making end and administration begin and given their interdependence how consistent can any understanding of what constitutes either be from board to board?

In practice, there is an acceptance that the policy role of the board is often overlooked, that board members do not concern themselves with the long term view, and that they concentrate primarily on current issues and events (Wells and McKibben, 1990; Hellawell, (1990); Arnott et al., 1991; New et al., 1993; Madden, 1993). While board members may recognise their role as policy makers, individual boards may vary considerably in the degree to which they are involved in initiating, preparing and evaluating policies. Boards adopt different stances relative to the school being managed and the issues requiring most attention. These, more than an ideal mode of operating, may determine the relationship between the board and the administration. Local practice on a board may be a pragmatic balance affected by the respective talents and personalities of the board members and the principal. In the operations of boards of management, a more immediate and practical concern may be the hierarchy of planning – who has authority and responsibility for decisions and actions

at different levels? According to Dansberger et al. (1992) the tendency among many boards to micromanage and to become immersed in day-to-day administration was properly the domain of the professional administrator was an obstacle to fundamental educational reform. In practice, while board members and administrators need a clear view of their role and what issues are board concerns and what issues ought to be left to the administration within the context of devolved responsibility, there may be substantial areas of overlap.

The board of management in the voluntary secondary and community schools is presented as an instrument of participatory democracy. Developing a school mission and policy, establishing oversight procedures, defining standards of accountability, and ensuring adequate planning for future needs within the parameters of the board's delegated authority outlined in its governing documents, in a collaborative process, would appear to be the primary leadership function of the board. This role extends to planning in areas such as enrolment, staff deployment within the school, the maintenance and use of the physical facilities of the school, resources and finances and their application in the pursuit of the goals of the school and its programmes. The discussion suggests that while the primary role of the principals is to oversee the details of the running of the schools within the constraints and policy parameters set by the board, they also have a role in the policy process. In terms of the empirical study the following questions arise from the discussion and will be addressed:

- How do boards and board members see their mandate?
- In terms of that mandate how effective are the boards of management as instruments of participatory democracy?
- What topics are considered at their meetings?
- How often are topics such as budget and resources, curriculum content and goals, evaluation of school programmes, personnel, student progress among others raised at board meetings?
- How effective are the boards in meeting the terms of their role as stated for them in their governing documents? Do the boards exercise a policy role?
- What input, if any, do principals make to the policy process?
- How useful is the policy/administration model in understanding board operations?

These questions relate to a subsidiary question to the main question addressed in this study. Do the boards provide leadership through policy for their school? The role they play, and its relevance to the board members may indicate their effectiveness as instruments of participatory democracy. Decision-making is at the heart of that role. Board decision-making is the process of arriving at a

judgement based upon the perspectives of different persons and groups about an issue that concerns them. Information is an important part of the process.

4.4.2 INFORMATION AND DECISION-MAKING

In their decision-making processes in the context of their devolved mandate, the boards of management are expected to respond to the expectations and be vehicles for the interests and concerns of trustees around ethos, purpose and viability; parental expectations that the board will respond to their perceptions of what constitutes a good school in meeting the needs of their children; and the professional concerns, interests and values of staff. There is an expectation based on the corporate character of the board and the nominee status of its members, that it will protect, promote and enhance trustee, parent and teacher influence and values, not through decision-making oriented towards satisfying special interests as represented by the board members, but by making decisions oriented towards producing positive results for the school.

The management of information plays a key role on boards. Information is a key element in decisionmaking process. The effective board member is an informed board member, informed not just about the school but the broader educational context. The more informed board members are about the school, the pupils, the school catchment and educational issues, the more likely they can contribute positively to board decision-making and the life of the school. The National School Public Relations Association of the Alberta School Boards Association (1995, unpaginated) states that what makes a school council succeed is the information it gets through the principal about board actions, the curriculum, student performance, among other areas. Wolhstetter (1993, p. 4) argues that "power can only be decentralized if the individuals to whom power is entrusted have access to the information to make good decision-making seems to be determined by its access to information. Zeigler and Jennings (1974) saw a great need for improved information processes in school governance, particularly as districts grew and technical developments began to make school business more complex.

Information will come to the board from many sources – principally from the members themselves and their constituencies, official sources, parents, and pupils. Control of information and its flow can facilitate decision-making. Much of the official information about the school is channelled through the professionals on the board. There is the potential for the person who processes the information for the board to have power and influence in determining issues, controlling the flow of information to the board, and establishing its agenda. This can also be a source of power in policy development and decision-making. Ziegler and Jennings (1974) and Cistone (1977) indicated that an administrator could retain a great degree of control and increase the need of a board for expert assistance by the way he/she handled information. In some cases a board can be inundated with trivia and its processes confounded by poor information management. In other cases, where vested interests are the source, the quality of the information may be suspect. Baron and Howell (1974, p.126) stated that the better the flow of information, the greater the respect and trust among governors, and the more co-operative governing bodies were. For Taylor (1977) proper communication and consultation procedures between all interested parties facilitated real partnership in governing structures. Kogan (1986, p. 152) suggested that parent-governors were more concerned with good communications than with formal accountability in their relationship with schools. Morgan (1990, p. 86) found that parent governors in his study wished to be better informed and were interested in curriculum matters, but unable to increase their knowledge by formal means. Information empowered parent-governors in the discharge of their duties (p. 90-91). For Baron and Howell, Taylor and Kogan information included systematic input from the community. The source of information to boards is thus an important issue. It might be expected that the professionals on the boards would seek to have their perspective accepted. The information available to the board might not reflect a view from the wider community if that wider community view did not have direct access to the board.

The processes and vehicles through which information is communicated on boards are important issues for boards. Hange and Leary (1991) found that the professionals made the predominance of presentations to the board, outnumbering the public by over 3:1 (p.6). The board made decisions principally on information presented to them by staff. Board agendas were driven by this information. Kogan et al. (1984) and Golby (1985) refer to the headteacher's report to the board as a vehicle of information and also of control. Canniffe (1993, p. 257) saw information in terms of power. He concluded, in his study in Irish schools, that "the power of the board largely resided in the principal by virtue of his/her control of information to the board, but that on occasion the board would adopt measures which may be at variance with the principal's opinion (p. 257)." Effectively, the board, through its dependence on the administration, had become a tool in the hands of the administration. A broadly similar position was described by Whitaker (1986, p. 129) in the United Kingdom. The headteacher provided the major link between the board and the school, and the board was a necessary evil, to whom it was difficult to be accountable but who could be taught about the school. On boards, the quality of information and how it is processed is important.

The receptivity of the boards and their member's perception of their role as decision-makers can also be a factor. Uncertainty about roles, responsibilities and relationships can lead to poor communications; poor communications can cause uncertainty about roles, responsibilities and relationships. Maden (1993) found in her survey of governors and principals in Warwickshire, that governors seemed to be particularly well informed about administrative matters. Their respective information needs pointed to uncertainty regarding the "hierarchy of accountability" among governors and headteachers. A wealth of information was being shared with governors, yet governors wanted more sharing than headteachers saw as necessary. They were, she concluded, still in the process of defining their respective roles in governance and management. Ambiguity in role differentiation as between levels in the macro structure as well as at board level between board and principal may affect policy and decision-making.

The centrality of the areas over which the board has a decision-making role to the overall operations of the school may be indicative of the level of devolved governance allowed in the system at school level. According to Malen (1989), the effectiveness of devolved governance structures as participatory decision-making forums is directly related to the degree of the devolution of authority within the system. The OECD (1995, p. 38) stated that "the influence, the power of a level within the education system does not depend solely on the proportion of decisions it takes." The amount and control of resources and the range of decisions delegated may be good but not conclusive indicators of the degree of authority actually devolved to the board. The response of the board to its decision-making responsibilities, not just in terms of being busy about a lot of decisions, but the process it uses in its approach to decision-making may be more indicative of its effectiveness as a forum for participation.

Theoretically at least, board members are free to raise, seek information, discuss and make proposals about any matter pertinent to their role as board members, within the procedures of the board. Hange and Leary (1991), based on an examination of the kind of decisions and nature of actions of district school boards in West Virginia over a five year period, found that financial and personnel issues were the first and second most frequent areas of decision-making. They found that over a quarter of all decisions were concerned with finance (p.6). The boards made few decisions on setting or reviewing school district policy, and board development seemed to have a low priority for most boards (p.8). This finding is reflected in studies in Ireland and the United Kingdom. Keohane (1979, p. 93-95), in her study of boards of management in primary schools in Ireland, found that the practical involvement of the boards and their input into decisions, and especially the involvement of the lay members on boards, was primarily in the areas of finance, fundraising and school

maintenance. Harling (1984, p. 178) reached a similar conclusion. Hanley (1989) had similar findings. The effective decision-making role of parents at, and their control of boards of management was substantially limited by the conduct of meetings, by the limitations implicitly imposed on agenda and discussion at these meetings, and the fact that meetings were held on school property on an irregular basis (p. 264). Parents also lacked expertise, knowledge and managerial experience. Their professional colleagues controlled information and training. It is worth noting that in the locations of these studies, there was no formal hindrance placed on members to raise issues.

Gaskil (1993, p. 6) set out the characteristics of a democratic decision-making group in the following terms:

A small group is democratic if it has equally distributed decision-making power, an inclusive membership committed to democracy, healthy relationships among its members, and a democratic method of deliberation. Group deliberation is democratic if group members have equal and adequate opportunities to speak, neither withhold information nor verbally manipulate one another, and are able and willing to listen.

Wohlstetter and Mohrman (1994) identified elements present in schools with effective decisionmaking. All participants were trained in team skills and decision-making skills; there was joint diagnosis of the problems among teams; teams were allowed to make decisions without the principal having a veto; teams had good information; teams were allowed broaden their perspectives through approaches such as visiting and seeing effective practices in other schools. They stated (p.8) that they had observed three types of barriers to effective decision-making: "(1) principals who were autocratic or who failed to utilise input; (2) staff factionalism, including competition between departments or divisiveness between those in favour of reform and those opposed; and (3) staff apathy and unwillingness to get involved." With some minor modifications, it would seem that these findings could apply at board of management as well as at school level. Decision-making power may not be distributed among board members, individual members of groups may exercise a veto, there may not be a democratic method of deliberation that gives members equal and adequate opportunities to speak, members may be unwilling to listen to each other, information may be withheld or manipulated. In these circumstances the level of democratic decision-making is suspect. If a board is captive to any element - individual or group - or if its processes are short-circuited, while it can continue to function, its role is reduced to "rubber-stamping" decisions in which it has not actively and comprehensively involved itself. On this type of board individuals and groups are effectively disenfranchised, whether this happens as the result of political manoeuvring on the board, or their own effective passivity. Such a board may be ineffective in that it is not functioning according to its mandate, since involvement and collaborative effort is a significant part of its raison

d'être.

Has the introduction of the boards represented "... a new perception of education as a community enterprise, and of the school as a community in itself, made up of management, teachers, parents and pupils united in a common purpose and all working together to achieve the best possible fulfilment of their aims and objectives." (CMCSS, 1985, p. 5). The information and decision-making processes of the boards provide lenses on how democratic and participative the boards of management are as governance vehicles. Have board members access to information? Do the boards make decisions in a democratic manner? The discussion raises issues that will be addressed in the empirical study:

- Do board members feel that they have they have sufficient information about the board and the school?
- Do they have equality of access to information?
- Are they comfortable seeking information?
- Are they proactive in seeking out information independently or are they dependent on the board for information they need?
- Are board members well informed about wider educational issues and are there formal exchanges between them and their constituencies?

The decision-making processes from the point of contemplating a proposal to reaching a decision can give an insight into the value-system and functioning of the board, whether it has a corporate identity, whether its processes are open and collaborative, how board members contribute and relate to the board, how they relate to and involve their nominating groups:

- In their decision-making, are the board members responding to their own consciences and their personal interpretation of what they see as best for the school as a whole, rather than as representatives of their nominating group?
- How are board decisions arrived at by consensus or majority vote?

The norms or rules of "power" and the processes of accountability may determine what issues are raised for decision at the board meetings and how the membership and their interests are involved in the processes of decision-making. The boards are not just forums for sharing information. They are also forums in which power is shared with and accountability rendered to the stakeholders for a purpose.

4.4.3 BOARD POWER AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The decisions made by the board of management and the processes used may be determined by the underlying power framework on the board, and may indicate the effectiveness of the board in being democratic, participative and accountable. A significant amount of discussion around boards is concerned with authority and power, particularly in the context of the centralisation/decentralisation debate and the tensions in the central/local relationships (Chapter Two). Many other agencies have or claim power in education and exert pressure at government, department and local level relating to hours worked, the nature of the work to be done, how the money is to spent. Birley (1970) suggested, in discussing efficiency in the education system, that the system is so complex and so fluid that it would be pointless to seek efficiency through trying to bring control into as few hands as possible. Birley argues that there are tensions in education management "between democracy and efficiency, planning and pragmatism, philosophy and procedures" (p.128). Many people and institutions have responsibility for education, but responsibility is not the same as power (p.14). Seeking the locus of power in this form of educational management might be as pointless as seeking the locus of control.

While theoretically boards have power, it can be asked in the context of the values that underpin their existence and the organisational environment in which they function - what is the nature of this power? There are many different descriptions, but essentially two types of power. The most prominent inherited model of power in society and in schools defines it in terms of control, dominance understood as power over another, authority. In these terms, power is command and control. The second type of power is defined as collaboration, participation, consensus-building or sharing power with others, and underpins the concepts of shared decision-making, partnership and collaborative management. Bacharach and Mundell (1993, p. 434) describe power in terms of authority and influence. In their terms, authority is the right to make the final decision, while influence consists of attempts to persuade those with authority to make the decision one way. Authority is determined by the organisational context, whereas influence is more informal and may be related to expertise, information or other persuasive resources. Sheets (1972), while making a clear differentiation between the two concepts, links authority and leadership. He places power as a subset of leadership. He pinpoints three qualities of leadership - values, power, and judgement. Leadership seeks to motivate people to interiorise new values and attitudes freely, while authority commands people to act in certain ways. Authority imposes an obligation, while leadership seeks to win participation. Power - though ultimately coercive - in these terms is the potential for

influence, and leadership is the process for influencing individual or group actions towards a particular goal. At the base of the influence approach to power is recognition of and respect for the potential of people to be agents of their own growth. Authoritative power may change things, not people. Leadership is the ability to elicit responses from people that go beyond mechanical compliance. The "... voluntary aspect of leadership sets it apart from power and authority." (Steers, 1991, p. 483).

The concept of accountability is at the heart of many of the studies based in the United States (Peak, 1964; Iannacone and Lutz, 1970) and central to ongoing educational reforms across all the educational jurisdictions discussed in chapter two above. Many of the educational reform initiatives are promoted within a publicly defined framework of decentralised control and determined or agreed standards of accountability. While responsibilities are devolved downwards, there is an upward as well as outward accountability, upwards to a Government Department and outward to the community. Assessment and reporting systems involving a multiplicity of agencies are being used as tools to drive educational reform (OECD, 1999). An emphasis on accountability, and standards measured through testing, is a primary tool used within many of the systems. There is more testing at all levels and more public comparisons both within and between the different systems and a growing literature around assessment, standards, and accountability issues (Macpherson, 1996; Cuttance, 1994). The trade-off for greater local autonomy is greater accountability. Caldwell (1993, p. 167-68), in relation to Australia, described it as instituting "leaner but more powerful central functions in terms of the formulation of goals, the setting of priorities and the building of frameworks for accountability, but with a clear shift towards school-site management in terms of operational decision-making, including budgeting and community involvement."

Accountability is not a new concept in education. What appears to be changing is how it is understood and how it can be rendered, particularly in larger school units in urban environments and in a society which is more complex and demanding (McDonnell, 1989). The current demand for greater accountability and more formal accountability structures is part of a general trend in society, and a public demand from parents, educators and legislators for identifiable educational and social outcomes. Very direct and utilitarian answers to questions about the accountability of schools are emerging in public comment and in a rapidly growing body of legislation that explicitly identifies accountability as a foundation value (*Goals 2000: Educate America*, United Stated, 1994; *Our Children, Our Future*, Newfoundland and Labrador, 1992; Education Reform Act, 1998, United Kingdom; Education Act, Ireland, 1998; OECD, 1999). At one level accountability appears to be a relatively simple and straightforward concept understood in terms of efficiency and effectiveness,

of accountable management with its emphasis on value for money, performance indicators, resource management, information, financial and other control systems (Gray and Jenkins, 1986; Miller and Scapens, 1995). At another level, accountability when related to a value base is a relatively ambiguous concept that carries through into almost every aspect of the management value system and its impact on the stakeholders of the school.

Chapman and Boyd (1986, p. 36), in their study of the implications of reform in Victoria, Australia, on the role of the principal, describe the traditional "line of authority understanding" of accountability held by the more traditional principals in their study. Principals deferred to the legal authority of the Department while "steadfastly guarding their claim to 'ultimate responsibility' in the school." (p.36). Kogan (1986 pp. 18-19) summarises a debate on the locus of authority of the boards authority to hold educators responsible and noted the potential for conflict between the different agencies claiming that right. Halver Jonson (1995, pp.2ff.) defined accountability in terms of the obligation to answer for the execution of one's assigned responsibilities, "as the cycle of setting measurable goals, planning what needs to be done to meet these goals, reporting progress towards goals, evaluating the reports and using the feedback to make improvements (p. 2)"

Earl (1995, p. 61) posits that at the heart of the accountability relationship are two elements -"responsibility (legal or moral) and entitlement. Someone is responsible and someone is entitled." In her view, accountability "... is not tests; it is not indicators; it is not dropout rates; it is not financial reports; and it is not a common report card ... (it) depends on the establishment of dialogue and debate. The essence of accountability is good communication and genuine respect." It involves "trust, shared understanding, and mutual support - not just information."(p.62). This understanding of accountability appears to contrast with that expected by her fellow Canadian, Halver Jonson (1995), set out above. Jonson's definition seemed to ignore the "trust" element of accountability described by Earl as a relevant category in establishing the duty of school councils and administrators and showed a tendency to contractualise the educational relationship between the school and the community. Jonson, in his role as Minister for Education in the macro-context of educational reform, presented an understanding of accountability understood in terms of educational results, and which measured organisational effectiveness and outputs according to what was essentially an instrumental concept of accountability. How this view fits within a devolved framework that encourages participation and involvement of all interested parties is a difficulty for the system at all its levels.

The understanding of accountability that appears to underpin the comments of the Australian principals, Kogan, and Halver Johnson places it within an hierarchical/bureaucratic model of governance. In this model, leaders needed to know what was happening in their organisations at all times. They were ultimately responsible, and all levels within the organisation were accountable to them. As a model, it had its own principles and its own strengths. It placed responsibility in the hands of a small educated elite that could be trusted, and protected this elite in its use of a defined and limited amount of power within the organisation, and assumed that that power was used in the interests of the common good. Often the result was a bureaucratic style of leadership based on the hierarchy of authority explicitly defined, legally determined, and structured within the organisation. Max Weber is credited with developing a conceptualisation of bureaucracy and identified different patterns of bureaucratic leadership (Roth and Wittich, 1968). The concept of bureaucracy understood in hierarchical terms in relation to democracy is argued between those who see it as an instrument of domination, and those who see it as a support to democracy. On the principle that people have a right to influence aspects of society and government that affect them, the bureaucratic style of leadership and management has been challenged by an organic or participatory approach based the concepts of collegiality, subsidiarity and participation.

In the organic/participatory approach, it is assumed that people have enough knowledge and understanding of important matters that affect their lives, and a right to be involved. Also, they are part of a community and must have the interests of the community at heart. Leaders are seen as part of the group and power belongs to the group. Each person has a positive contribution to make to the whole group. In this model, the accountability process is essentially political. An essential difference between the hierarchical and participatory/organic approaches is that the former seems to be based on fear, authority and control, and the latter on trust, freedom and responsibility.

Accountability is not just an issue for the individual school, it is a local community and system wide issue as well. As the context in which it is being called and rendered is changing, so too is the concept. Hill and Bonan (1991) recognised the importance of the macro-context and the responsibility of the schools for particular outcomes. In their view, a system of distinctive, site-managed schools requires a significant rethinking of accountability. They argued that the basis of a site-managed school's accountability must be its ability to define and maintain a distinctive character, not its compliance with procedural requirements. Murphy (1990) addressed the same delicate balance between central and local responsibility and accountability. In his view, what Chapman and Boyd (1986) referred to as a "line of authority understanding" of accountability was changing. He stated that in the context of devolved responsibilities, the roles of state policy-makers,

as well as the perspectives they bring to school improvement, look significantly different than in the past. Their role is in charting the course and in assessing the results, rather than in monitoring processes or effort, while allowing parents and schools greater freedom in directing their own destinies (p.14). From the perspective of a government department, a core dilemma in operating a system of participatory democracy in a tiered structure lies in delegating significant responsibilities through the tiers, while retaining the accountability of agencies within the tiers to the public for their outcomes.

For teachers and boards of management, an important issue in this debate is that of the teacher as a professional challenged by accountability measures demanded by governments against a background of reforms. These may be imposed, and predicated on value systems and approaches that may be at variance with accepted professional practices and values. The question of professionalism is a difficult one for teachers. It becomes more acute in an environment that seems to distrust the concept, and in which professionals are increasingly challenged to account for themselves in new ways. Bond (1996) described professionalism in terms of practices and skills, autonomy, the possession of a body of knowledge and the ability to apply this in practice. Professionalism implies a professional accountability to the standards of the profession, and traditionally teachers saw themselves as accountable within this professional model. Just as it is difficult to determine an exact or even functional framework for policy and administration, so it hard to delineate the boundaries of professions in their relationship with society as a whole. It is not the intention here to analyse the very broad range of issues around, and the extensive literature on bureaucracy, democracy, professionalism, and theories of governance, though these issues are important in any discussion of the purpose and operations of boards. The intention is merely to raise a practical concern for board relationships and practice in the context of an increasingly organic approach to government in a participatory democracy and, increasingly, a market driven concept of professionalism. Have the professions and teachers in particular any special claims to particular rights or privileges at either the theoretical or practical levels and what are the implications of current policies and trends for their accountability? Are the views of teachers as professionals respected by their colleagues on the board and taken into account in decision-making?

While much of the focus for greater and more defined measures of accountability is currently on teachers as professionals, it will inevitably become more focused on boards as their employers, and the boards themselves as educational agencies responsible for educational outputs. Out of what model should boards operate? While the hierarchical model promotes adherence to rules, it may limit creativity. An internal professional model emphasising professional standards appears to be less

acceptable to the broader public. An organic/political model may be difficult to control and may appear inefficient and open to abuse. The kind and extent of the accountability required of the board of management effectively defines the purpose for the school and its management, and indicates the degree of authority devolved to the board and the trust placed in it. It is an issue to be considered critically by boards as it links their purpose to what is required of them and their schools by those they serve, and to whom they are accountable. Developing a sense of accountability may be a useful learning tool as it implies a detailed understanding of the role of the school, and the active involvement of all the stakeholders with each other and with the school.

The move towards greater public accountability has been gradual but gathering in momentum. As an example, in the United Kingdom, the belief that schools should be made more accountable to the society they served through their governing boards underpinned the Taylor Report (1977). Boards, according to Taylor, should be restructured in terms of their membership and functions to ensure this accountability. Bacon (1978) delineated governor's roles as channels for community accountability, and as inspectors and legitimators of policy. Kogan et al. (1984) found that governors in general did not demand accountability from their schools. They placed boards in an accountability framework. They described the board's role in ensuring accountability as "immanent rather than actual." (p.18). The 1988 Education Reform Act promoted school reform within a framework of school-based management, school choice and school accountability. The accountability base was redefined to include the general society. It was extended further through the Parents' Charter (DFE, 1991) and Choice and Diversity (DFE, 1992), which specified in greater detail the entitlements of parents. Parents were to be the ultimate evaluators of schools and callers of school accountability in a context that gave them a free choice of school. Educational accountability came to be viewed in terms of responsiveness to the needs of the education consumers - parents and society. The demand for greater accountability, initially muted, grew in intensity over the period from the publication of the Taylor Report (1977) to the present time and is well documented (Bacon, 1978; Kogan, 1984 and 1986; Sallis, 1988, Thody, 1990). In the United Kingdom, the OFSTED inspection system, and the ongoing legislative empowerment of parents in particular, has enhanced the accountability framework considerably. In the United States, there has been a thrust towards holding schools accountable for results. Among the more popular strategies used are state tests to measure student achievement, "report cards" on the performance of individual schools, public ratings of schools, rewarding of successful schools, assistance to low-performing schools, and sanctions - including closure - of failing schools. Jerard and Boser (1999), based on survey of fifty states, claimed that the rhetoric about accountability often exceeded the reality.

While models of accountability abound, boards will need to consider their application in local terms. Defining and calling accountability can be a difficult process. The authority, and the associated accountability, granted to the board of management ought to be real and of substance (Keohane, 1979; Baron and Howell, 1984; Boehlje, 1994; Jenkinson, 1995). According to Malen et al. (1989) token involvement can lead to frustration and reversion to traditional practices. If only unimportant areas of responsibility are delegated, or if decisions taken are not acted on or are countermanded, the process will be seen as a sham and a form of manipulation, and alienation may result. Jenkinson (1995) reported a serious clash between activist parents in Alberta and the district boards about the alleged "powerlessness" of the newly constituted school councils from the perspective of the parents. From another perspective, Booth and Hill (1996) raised the question: "are governors ungovernable?" They argued that governors in the United Kingdom were unaccountable and uncontrolled. They pointed to difficulties with the governor role caught in the middle between the professionals and the education authority, with little relevant experience of many aspects of school life and management and often with little training. Hill and Bonan (1991) identified the core accountability issues as school climate, curriculum and pedagogy and how well these were matched to the needs of the students, how the school delivered on its promises to its students, and the experiences of its students. They stated that the ultimate accountability mechanism posited for a system of distinctive site-managed schools was parental choice. Choice, they claim, creates a decentralised accountability process in which the individual school carries the burden of product differentiation and proof of performance. A distinctive school ultimately lives on its reputation, which is based on its constituency's overall impression of its performance.

Accountability emerges as a major issue in the literature, as well as in the practice of most jurisdictions. There is concern with its definition as well as its extent, and the structures through which it is rendered. In the educational framework in Ireland, as it pertained up until the Education Act (Ireland) (1998), schools functioned within a broad framework of regulations set down and monitored by the Minister for Education and Science. Accountability was linked to compliance within a hierarchical structure that placed the school and its management firmly in the context of the rights of the trustees and Department of Education and Science. In the governing documents for both the community and voluntary secondary school boards, while the boards seek to involve people in the management process, the approach to authority in the overall structure appears to be hierarchical requiring compliance. There is a strong emphasis placed on their responsibilities. Responsibility is linked with accountability and service. There is little reference to any accountability to the broader community, though it could be argued that the Minister represented this constituency and through various initiatives sought to respond to the macro concerns expressed by it regarding the perceived

priorities of the educational system and their relevance to societal needs.

In the Education Act (Ireland) (1998), boards have been made more obviously accountable to both their local communities and to central government through school plans, whole school evaluation and other measures which will have the net effect of making schools more accountable to the education market place. Ensuring accountability and transparency in the education service is set out as one of the primary objects of the Act (Section 6). One of the functions of the Minister for Education and Science is to monitor, assess quality, efficiency and effectiveness in the system (Section 7). Schools shall also put systems in place for monitoring and assessing its own effectiveness and the quality of its services (Section 9). The Inpectorate shall also evaluate quality and effectiveness (Section 13). Boards of Management shall uphold and be accountable to the trustees for the school ethos, and shall have regard for "... accountability to students, their parents, the patrons and the community served by the school..."(Section 15). The principal is responsible for the creation of a positive school environment, setting school objectives in a consultative process, monitors these objectives, and is accountable to the board (Section 23). The Act sets a very clear accountability agenda for schools and their managements. As is evident from the responses of the teacher unions and the parents to the Act, the accountability provisions of the policy to devolve, and the accountability ethos remain key areas to be clarified. Who defines the accountabilities for the board of management? While the Act underlines the importance of a school's ethos and traditions, it also underlines the accountability of boards and schools. The challenge for boards of management and the Department of Education and Science will be to find ways of holding schools accountable without dominating local decisions or standardising practice. As the concept of accountability becomes more broadly based, this concern may be more theoretical than real. In an increasingly market driven society, the ultimate callers of accountability and what it means will be the consumers of the service – pupils, parents, society. The basic accountability is for quality in processes and outcomes.

The conceptualisation and identification of quality in an educational context is not easy. In the White Paper it was related to promoting "the highest standard of education and learning for all." (Department of Education, 1995, p. 7). There may be very different perspectives on what constitutes quality from parents, teachers, and trustees. Any definition of quality for the board needs to be broad enough to encompass the main aspects of its operation and that of the school. One of the purposes of the board is to involve various constituencies in the management of the school. One way ahead might be to involve all the constituencies in the construction of an accountability framework based on a shared understanding which draws together their different perspectives and needs. Power in the context of centralisation/decentralisation would seem to be the power to influence, to adapt,

to articulate opposing values to one another, to be flexible within a negotiated and accepted framework. This framework would seek to respect the boundaries of each of the players, while acknowledging their inter-relatedness in the pursuit of a common overarching purpose - quality. In these terms, the accountability process might be a way of sharing responsibility in a continuous and focused dialogue. The same approach may also apply in the internal relationships on the board between the board/principal and lay/professional interests.

Board accountability, taken as its ability to have its policies implemented, to oversee and hold its school accountable, and its own willingness to address difficult issues, relates to most areas of board operations. On the basis that a board is responsible and accountable to its trustees and to itself for the objectives set for it, and to hold its school accountable, the empirical study asks the different categories of board member:

- Were the powers of the board sufficient to meet the needs expressed to it?
- To whom did the board members see themselves accountable for the exercise of their powers?
- Did the board render accountability?
- Did it monitor its own policies and plans?
- Did it review the operations curricular and extra-curricular f the school periodically?
- Did it receive financial reports?

The principal is the leader of the school administration and the instructional leader of the school. He/she is also the secretary of the board of management in the majority of cases. He/she is in a focal position in terms of board operations generally and accountability in particular. The board/principal relationship is discussed in the following section.

4.4.4 BOARD - PRINCIPAL RELATIONSHIP

The board and principal relationship is a central concern in the studies. The principal is seen as the primary link between the board of management and the school. Taylor (1992, p. 16) stated that in a school that was working well, the aims and objectives of the principal and the board were the same. Mason (1982, p. 85ff.) suggested that educational institutions will not thrive unless the board has confidence in the principal. In the principal/board relationship, he suggested that communications and reasonable good will were the keys to success.

Morphet, Johns and Reller (1982, pp. 3-16) sketched a context in which the education service and

educational administration operates. In this context, they posited that the principal had an "extremely crucial" position (p.15). They stated that many forces, and "extremely difficult and insoluble problems (p. 3)", were pushing the administrator into management and leadership roles (p.16). Ridley's perspective on administration discussed above, if applied to the role of the school principal, does not make the role easier because "in aspects of management which involve policy and people, the answer cannot be reduced to a formula (Ridley, 1958, p.v)." Thompson quoted by Lynn (1987, p. 32) reinforces this view

The central function of administration is to keep the organisation at the nexus of several necessary streams of action, and because the several streams are variable and moving, the nexus is not only moving but also sometimes quite difficult to follow.

The principal has an important role in facilitating the level of governor participation in the board, as well as the effectiveness of that participation. Baron and Howell (1974, p. 126) stated that without the initiative from the head, governing bodies could do nothing to become effective partners. However, in dealings with their boards, heads kept "the cards too close to their chests." According to Bacon (1978, p. 98), headteachers tended to see their governors as

... kindly, knowledgeable and mainly professional people, who are invariably enthusiastic about the educational cause, are willing to lend their moral authority to the policies being developed by their school, but who don't usually wish to take too close an interest in its internal affairs and curriculum.

Kogan et al. (1984) found that the principal generally had a significant impact on the role played by the governors. In practice, there was a strong dependency, particularly from the perspective of the governors, on the principal. They stated (p.80) that the headteacher's relationship with his or her governing body was "more important in determining how the governors work than how the head operates." Governors acted in a manner supportive of their schools and their principals. The attitude of the headteacher was seen as a major determinant of governors' performance, their exercise of their powers and their development.

The board and the principal interact on numerous tasks associated with managing the school. Their relationship exists within a complex combination of rules, policies, procedures and the vagaries of human nature. The principal has an *ex officio* authority independent of the board in that he/she is responsible for the day-to-day running of the school and is the professional leader of the school with consequent responsibilities for educational and professional decisions. The issue of power sharing between the board and the school principal is potentially highly charged. There are misgivings among principals about boards, as well as an appreciation of their role. There are suggestions from board members and researchers that boards are dominated by professional interests, that the

principal, though a support to the board, effectively controls its operations, thereby limiting its power and influence. There is a concern over the board's ability to influence the strategic direction of its school, hold the school management responsible and to articulate the interests of the school's stakeholders to the school management. Bacon (1980, p. 78) stated that while Sheffield heads had initial misgivings about their new governing bodies, their experience of the operation of these bodies gradually convinced them of their merits. Chapman and Boyd (1986 p.28-58), based on research into the impact of decentralisation and devolution policies on the school principal in Australia, had an opposite finding to Bacon. They found that while there was an initial enthusiasm for community participation in school governance, this had diminished among principals at school level. Pascal (1987b, p. 198ff) and Maden (1993, Section 3) noted some confusion about the distribution of power among headteachers and governors. Pascal found that matters were improving as confidence resulting from experience was on the increase. Maden found that governors were not always sure whether they were being consulted, informed or being asked for a decision by their headteachers. In many instances, the head seemed to have made the particular decision but was now consulting the governors. Both heads and governors seemed strongly in favour of heads retaining decisions on internal management issues that traditionally were matters for the head.

Sallis (1988, p. 153) states that only very rarely, in her experience, did heads see themselves in a dynamic relationship with their governors. New et al (1993) found that a third of governors in their survey felt that power had shifted from the headteacher. A fifth believed that a partnership existed between them and their headteacher, while a further third believed that the head remained firmly in charge. The subtle and ambivalent nature of the relationship of the head/board in some schools is reflected in a description by Field (1993, p. 169) of the behaviour of a headteacher. The headteacher in question used "jargon and esoteric educational terminology" which, in effect, if not intentionally, "succeeds in imposing his professionalism, maintaining distance and possibly intimidating governors in the nicest of ways." Caniffe (1993) suggested a similar ambivalence in the Irish context. He suggested that principals saw their boards as instruments of management, which they could use "to make the organisation of the school more effective."(p.258). Principals were "quite creative" in the way they used their boards.

In the context of the district boards in the United States, Brodinsky (1977, p.14) did not see the board/superintendent relationship in oppositional or manipulative terms. In answer to his own question regarding who had the actual authority to run the schools, the superintendent or the board, he stated that "weak boards frequently relinquish their authority to strong chief school administrators or, being weak are largely stripped of their powers and responsibilities; but even strong boards must

share their powers with chief school administrators." Shearn et al. (1995) found that though governors had responsibility under the education reform acts in the United Kingdom for curricular, financial and staffing matters, they were reluctant to become closely involved. It was the headteacher who had *de facto* an increasing level of responsibility and power in a situation where governors had not accepted responsibility. In an Australian study, Gamage (1992 and 1994) stated that 78% of the respondents reported that the school principal took the initiative in forming the councils. Over 90% of the respondents felt that no particular individual or interest group dominated the councils.

On a day-to-day basis, a key relationship for the principal is that between himself/herself and the chairperson of the board. The chairperson is a key link between the board of management and the school administration and he/she has a significant role in the functioning of the board. This role is emphasised in the Articles of Management of the voluntary secondary boards, and only summarily mentioned in the case of the community schools boards. The relationship between the board and the administrator was noted by McKenna (1990, p.32) as paramount at times of critical incidents in the life of an institution, and this relationship was often "more personal than organisational and more relational than functional." Shearn et al. (1995, p.177) suggested "that one of the keys to understanding the way in which governing bodies exercised their responsibilities and may exercise them in the future could be appreciated by understanding the relationship between the head and the chair of governors." The leadership role and performance of the chairperson would appear to be a key element in the effectiveness of a board. On the negative side, the chairperson may fail to offer appropriate leadership, lack the skills and knowledge for effective leadership, overlook or actively block board attention to important areas. The chairperson needs to have a clear understanding of the mission of the board, and the vision and creativeness to lead the board in its pursuit.

Stone (1991) gives an insight from outside school boards on the influence of a chief executive on a board. She found that on the governing boards of non-profit organisations planning was key feature in their effectiveness. The role and experience of the executive director in the initiation and maintenance of systematic management and ongoing planning was found to be very significant. Ongoing and beginning planners were more likely than those with no planning experience - or those that had abandoned planning after an initial experience with the process - to have well-understood missions, and boards that had clear structures for decision-making.

There is a general acceptance of the importance of the school principal and his/her role relative to the dynamics in the operation of the board itself, and in terms of being its administrative arm. The perceptions and the difficulties discussed in the context of the policy/administration relationship on

boards may carry through into board-principal understanding of their relative roles and the relationships between them. The principal has administrative responsibility and is effectively the bridge between policy and administration. There is general agreement that the principal has significant influence as a catalyst, resource, and facilitator for the governing body, and as a creator of a participatory environment that enables it to find and develop a role relative to the school. Where or not this influence is positive or manipulative, as many of the studies in the United Kingdom suggest, is of interest to this study. Also of interest is the perspective of the principals – do they view their boards as - supportive, facilitative, intrusive, or even redundant? The principal is one category of professional on the board. Teacher nominees are another category. The following subsection will address the broader professional/lay relationship on the boards.

4.4.5 PROFESSIONAL/LAY RELATIONSHIPS AND CONTROL

The relationship between lay and professional members of the board emerges as a key area in the studies cited in chapter three as an indicator of the level of practical collaboration and participation on the boards. Professionals are understood as school staff members - headteachers and teachers, while the term lay is used to describe those members of the board who are not employees of the school. Neither the professionals nor the laity are homogeneous groupings. The issues of professional control in the system, the professional/lay relationship in the governance of the schools and an increasing level of conflict between boards and their administrations appear as regular themes. Kogan et al. (1984, p. 72) states that the professional dimension on boards is crucial in understanding how they work. Governing bodies "are not only expected to review the work of professionals but the reviewers, themselves, must reconcile lay and professional viewpoints."

Many of the studies in the United Kingdom support the view that full and equal partnership and participation was not common on the majority of governing bodies in the 1980s, and that change was happening very slowly. The context of the debate changed radically as a result of the Education Reform Acts and subsequent legislation. Nevertheless, the concern, especially about the apparent reluctance of professionals to involve the laity in the area of curriculum, remains. It is a reluctance reciprocated by an apparent unwillingness among many lay governors to become involved, though in the later studies there are indications of a change in this area.

Baron and Howell (1974, p. 128) stated that professionals tended to be wary of lay governors and protective of their "professionalism." Bacon (1978, pp. 173ff) found that power was being held by the professionals and the politicians concerned with managing the education system. He found a

professional dominance of the processes and culture of education. As was found by Kerr (1964) and Cistone (1977) in the United States and Hanley (1989) in Ireland, Bacon found socialisation strategies used by the professionals to limit the impact of attempts to lessen their dominant role. Bacon refers to "subtle incorporation processes" and to parent governors having to form "a de facto pupil relationship with the headteacher."(p. 129). Laity were being socialised into a deferential relationship with the professionals. For Kogan et al (1984, p. 92) governing bodies, with some exceptions, were professionally dominated institutions.

With Bacon (1978, p. 93), Golby (1985. p. 59), and Brigley (1989, p.4), Kogan et al. (1984, p.90ff.) noted that governors found aspects of educational practice hard to understand. Curriculum was a particular area where they were not getting involved or, were being effectively excluded. This reluctance was also noted by Baginsky, Baker and Cleave (1991), and by Deem and Brehony (1993), reflecting an apparent acceptance that curriculum decisions ought to rest with the professionals. Their role in curriculum seemed to be supervisory and they were not being invited to discuss curriculum. They seemed to be uncomfortable in the area and willing to leave it to the professionals. Golby (1985, p. 59ff.) suggested that governors were more at ease in dealing with practical, visible matters. Golby (1989) noted a change. He found that governor reluctance in this area appeared to be declining as the centrality of the curriculum to the work and life of the school came to be more appreciated. Baron and Howell (1974, p. 128) and Kogan (1984, p.92) found that the most co-operative governing bodies were those in which a positive effort was being made to involve all the governors, lay and professional, especially in the area of curriculum.

Golby and Brigley (1989) and New et al.(1993), though noting a growing independence among lay governors, found a continuing reliance by them on the professionals. Sallis (1991) still found it necessary to argue for a value-shift that would result in school governors not being kept at arm length, or institutionalised into ways of thinking determined by the school professionals. Pascal (1987b, p. 200) did not concur with the view of lay governors as powerless and ineffectual, compared to the professionals, though she agreed (p. 198) with Kogan et al. (1984, p. 42) that the initiative on governing bodies seemed to rest with the professionals, and that the role of lay governors tended to be re-active. She found, using a conflict model proposed by Wirt (1981), that governing bodies ranged from the quiescent, which accepted professional domination, to the turbulent, with a degree of lay and professional conflict. While Maden (1993) noted a degree of confusion about roles between boards and principals, she also noted a growing assertiveness on boards. Not all governors were willing to play a subservient role (Golby and Appleby, 1991; Field, 1993; Deem and Brehony, 1993). Hellawell (1990) Golby (1990) and Maden (1993), Evetts

(1994a), and Shearn et al. (1995) to a lesser degree, also suggest that the reliance of governors on their principals is changing as governors become more aware of their powers and become more assertive. The overall experience appears to be mixed, dependent on many circumstances. While there does appear to be a growing awareness of the potential of boards to exercise significant power and influence, there is also a reluctance to do so for personal or other reasons such as the complexity of the task, tradition, and time.

Cistone (1972, p. 4), writing about the experience in the United States, stated that:

Ultimately the politics of education revolves around a number of vital conflicts The most fundamental conflict today relates to two competing values: popular participation and professional autonomy.

While there is still evidence of conflict between popular participation and professional autonomy in most of the jurisdictions discussed in chapter two, the bulk of the evidence suggests that there is a greater acceptance by professionals of a greater role for the laity in educational decision-making (Wohlstetter and Odden, 1992; David, 1994; McPhee, 1996 Guskey and Peterson, 1996). Conflict is present on many boards in the professional/lay relationship as board members become more conscious of their role and more aggressive in its exercise (Mercer, 1996; Evetts, 1994).

There is some evidence of a response from the professionals to the growing assertiveness among the laity. Mercer (1996, p. 170), in his study of secondary headteacher isolation, states that "many (headteachers) commented on the need to manipulate their governing body so as to achieve the balance of power and control which they considered necessary to allow them to discharge their duties." In the changing context, there are increased possibilities of micro-political activity on boards. Evetts (1994) argues that in the work relationships involved in running schools, the occupational culture of headship has changed fundamentally. The role of governors is more immediate and direct, decision-making is slower "... because of the increased extent of negotiations ... (and) ... legal requirements" (p.42). The chances of conflict in these negotiations were increasing (p.43). She also notes evidence that heads are becoming more directive and autocratic in their management styles.

According to Wirt (1981), underlying professional dominance is an attitude that the laity are incapable of defining the problems and how they should be dealt with, which may attempt to manipulate the laity rendering them powerless or may treat them with indifference or even hostility. Defining and re-defining the lay/professional boundaries is an ongoing process as the laity become more confident and assertive in challenging the professional perspectives. He (pp. 61ff.) proposed

a "deductive developmental model" of conflict-emergence over five stages - quiescence, issue emergence, turbulence, resolution and closure – to describe the changing relationships. In this model, there is movement from a stage where the professionals dominate "in the power sense that *they set the definitions* of what constitutes problems, how these problems will be treated, who is qualified to do it, and how the service will be evaluated (p.63)", to a stage "when resolution results in changes which redefine professional services."(p.84). Kogan et al. (1984, p. 93) argue that the governing boards in their study appeared to "fall into the category of issue emergence" as the professional definitions of service were being challenged on an individual basis directed against individuals not the system. There was evidence that some governing bodies were strongly challenging the professionals. Though governing bodies were "to a greater or lesser extent, professionally dominated, there were marked differences in lay reaction" ranging from an acceptance to challenge of professional leadership.

Conflict, or its absence, can be an indicator of the culture of a board. It may, as Wirt (1981) indicates, be part of the external environment of the board. It may be part of the internal environment of the board between individuals or groups on the board or in the relationship between the board and the professionals. It may be the natural consequence of open debate and diversity or misunderstanding, or it may be rooted in alienation or disillusionment. The level of conflict and its management on a board may be an indicator of the quality of board communications, how information is managed, the level of consensus on the board around its purpose, the board and administration relationship, poor board processes. Knowing that no conflict exists may be no more than an indication of conflict-avoidance or non-decisions. Conflict can reflect or can lead to factions. Chait et al. (1993, p. 85) state that effective boards attempt to minimise conflict and avoid win-lose situations. Questions that arise relate to the relationships on the board - are they built upon mutual trust and support? Do board processes and procedures exacerbate the potential for misunderstanding and conflict? Is conflict a feature of board deliberations and decision-making? These questions will be addressed in the empirical study.

Conflict on boards may also result from role conflicts. Board members are present on the board as nominees of different groups. They are both providers and beneficiaries of the education process. This dual role has the potential of developing competing loyalties in board members - whose interest is dominant, their interest as providers, or their interest as beneficiaries? Golby (1993, p. 75) refers to this phenomenon as "an essential problem of identity." The board of management "can hardly be a board of directors and a consumer council at one and the same time, though of course over time it may develop some of the functions of each." For teachers and parents in particular this may be

a particular source of tension. The relationship of professionals to one another on the board may also lead to competing loyalties. According to Kogan et al. (1984) this may be most acute in the principal/staff member relationship and may/may not pose a problem, particularly for the staff member in situations which may involve conflicts of interest.

The board structure suggests a partnership that shares power between trustees, managers and providers and gives the beneficiaries a voice in how they are to benefit. The effective board is proactive in promoting participation of all the groups. Kogan et al. (1984, p. 56) stated that the parent members on the boards of governors were often seen as "observers." Observers are not effective partners. The enhanced role envisaged for them, which is common across all the systems discussed in Chapter Two, goes beyond observer status to full involvement.. When the role of the board is superseded by either a particular interest or by the administration and its role is effectively reduced to ratification, it ceases to function as a board according to its governing values. The empirical study will address the level of involvement and participation of both the lay and professional members on the boards.

In the literature, concepts used regularly in relation to the democratisation of school boards are orientation, legitimisation, responsiveness and representation. These concepts have been referred to in chapters two and three above. They are discussed further in the following section as elements and expressions of participatory democracy.

4.4.6 ORIENTATION, RESPONSIVENESS, LEGITIMISATION, REPRESENTATION.

Currently, the members of the boards of management in the voluntary secondary and community schools are described as nominees rather than as representatives. Pitkin (1967) and Mann (1975) distinguish between a "trustee" and a "delegate" form of representation and orientation on boards, between board members acting primarily according to their own judgement and values or as representatives acting primarily according to the views of those represented. The White Paper (Department of Education, 1995) appears to make a distinction between elected parent members of boards, who are elected on the basis of parent's "entitlement to representation" (p. 140) and "nominees of the patron." (p. 148). The White Paper states that overall "the composition and operation of the boards of management should reflect and promote public accountability to the immediate community served by the school and to the State as the predominant source of funding for schools." (p.145).

Orientation relates to the form of control exercised by those governed over the governors, and the avenues through which all the parties may participate in decision-making and problem solving. This control is exercised primarily at board level and the form it takes is often a factor of board culture. Bailey (1965) used the concepts of "arena" and "elite" board behaviours to describe the culture of board decision-making. Becker (1970) described the culture of board decision-making in terms of "sacred" and "secular". Pitkin (1967) and Mann (1975) used the terms "trustee" and "delegate" to describe board member orientation. In general terms, the more open the board process, the more it was equated to an "arena-secular-delegate" orientation, the greater was the perceived level of public control. Through giving their consent to the outcome of the process, the governed legitimise the process. They give their consent to be governed. This consent continues to be given in an active or passive way through the communication processes of the board, through the meetings of the board, and in the acceptance of its decisions. Orientation is related to responsiveness.

Responsiveness has to do with the relationships within the board and between the board and its external environment – its ability to develop and maintain healthy relationships with its primary constituencies both reflecting the needs of these constituencies to the board and communicating the board's response. A particular nominee orientation may enhance or limit the responsive stance of a board. As set out in chapter three, responsiveness takes different forms in the context of participatory democracy, and is considered a core element in a board's effectiveness (Kerr, 1964; Iannacone and Lutz, 1970; Zeigler, Jennings and Peak, 1974; Zeigler and Tucker, 1978; Danzberger et al., 1986). A non-responsive board may be in the control of a dominant group, may lack the structures, the confidence, or the willingness to engage its constituents, or it may reflect a range of constituency attitudes or expectations - satisfied through apathetic, disillusioned, dormant. Boyd (1976, p.551-552) argued that "schoolmen" usually attempted to act in harmony with what they perceived as the predominant community values and expectations. Inevitably, this perspective has a strong subjective element and can result in an approach which claims that the board, in not responding to a particular interest group, is in fact responding to the broader public interest but without engaging that public in any form of consultative process. Alternatively, a responsive board may be responding to the strongest or better organised voice rather than the broader public interest or acting on an "ad hoc" agenda which is determined primarily by approaches made to it. Neither perspective appears adequate in itself.

A responsive relationship between a board and its constituent groups will need to supersede the subjective and the reactive response. Responsiveness ought to be a formally structured and transparent interaction between governed and governors that results in a collective rather than an

individual outcome. It is as relevant to internal board relationships as it is to the board's external relationships. Responsive relationships, legitimisation, personal development, and bringing people together, serve to make management output more acceptable to the managed, enables persons to have some responsibility for matters which affect them and enables them to understand the collective purposes of the group or organisation (Pennock, 1979). All of these aims would seem to have an application in the context of boards, though achieving them may be difficult as they require a high level of commitment and participation on the part of all the stakeholders and their nominees.

Legitimisation is the process through which the board as an aggregate of interested parties given direction and consent to the work of the school and its administration. According to Ruef and Scott (1998, p.877) Max Weber was the first of the social theorists to stress its importance. Such man (1995, p. 574) noted that legitimacy is a "generalised perception" representing the "reactions of observers to the organisation as they see it." Suchman (1995), and Ruef and Scott (1998), drawing on an extensive literature, differentiate between different forms and levels of legitimisation and draw the conclusion that identification of and attention to the various constituencies served by an organisation is important. Different constituencies may emphasise different standards and criteria in determining its legitimacy. Different constituencies legitimise the work of the board, and through the board the work of the school. It can be a form of "rubber-stamping" where the board gives its technical approval to proposals presented to it or to work already done, or it can be a the result of the full participation of all concerned. Feistritzer (1989) concluded that the school district board in the United States was a "rubber stamp" for the superintendent. Kerr (1964, p. 58) in the United States and Bacon (1977, p.16) in the United Kingdom, suggested that management bodies merely legitimised policies that were currently being followed in their schools. Legitimisation relates also to the participation of members in board activities. Pascal (1987b, p. 190 - 200) found that the dominant role played by governors was one of internal support to the school, a finding which is reflected in the work of Kogan et al. (1984), Thody (1990), Curtis (1993). Governors rarely failed to support and legitimise the principal's position. In Boyd's terms (1975, p. 108) such a board was in danger of becoming "an arm of management rather than an overseer of management." Jenni (1991, p.137), based on a four year longitudinal study of Minnesota school districts, found "that the activities of site councils tend to be observational and discussional rather than advisory and decisional." Legitimisation relates to the way board does its business - whether its processes are open or closed, inclusive or exclusive, hierarchical or participatory, sacred or secular.

Dimaggio and Powell (1983) suggest that an open and inclusive legitimisation process on its board contributes to the survival of the organisation, which is its ultimate, though implicit, goal. It

enhances the ability of an organisation to attract support and resources. It may also limit its independence as organisations modify themselves in the direction of "increasing compatibility with environmental characteristics (p. 149)." Formal and informal pressures are exerted on organisations "by other organisations on which they are dependent and by cultural expectations in the society within which organisations function" either as force, persuasion or invitation to join in collusion (p.151). The experience of education systems in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom outlined in Chapter Two serves to underline the importance of inclusive processes in educational decision-making. In the context of boards of management in Ireland as currently constituted, their dependence on financial resources from independent community sources is minimal as the bulk of their current expenditure is provided directly by way of grant or budget by the Department of Education and Science. Boards will usually be of one voice in seeking additional current or capital resources or personnel, with the result that resource acquisition may not be a source of contention on boards. The application of the resources and related decisions may become more contentious as boards are allowed greater control over and responsibility for school finances (Department of Education and Science, 1999). Legitimisation, personal development, and bringing people together, described by Pennock (1979) as making management output more acceptable to the managed, enables persons to have some responsibility for matters which affect them and enables them to understand the collective purposes of the group or organisation.

Board orientation is also discussed in terms of modes of representation - whether board members act primarily as representatives of interest groups, or in a nominee capacity as guardians of the interests of the school. Pitkin (1967, p. 46) states that representation can be in any of four forms depending on the level of control the represented have over their representative - whether it be formal, descriptive, symbolic or substantive. On one end of the scale, the formal representative, once appointed, gives little feedback to those represented. On the opposite end of the scale, the substantive representative acts according to an ongoing mandate in a manner responsive to the wishes of the represented. A board member or a board operating out of a nominee orientation will tend to support and defend the school administration, and will put the interests of the school above stakeholder interests. Boyd (1975, p. 108) described such a board as "an arm of management rather than an overseer of management." Pitkin's discussion of representation echoes the concepts used by Kerr (1964), Bailey (1965), Becker (1970), and Mann (1975) in relation to board culture. For Pitkin (1969, p.5), the issue was "how to engineer a really efficient machine of representation." He found in the theoretical literature around representation "the persistence of puzzling, seemingly irresolvable conflicts and controversies" (p. 7) and little agreement on what it meant.

There is an ongoing search reflected in the literature for a balance between representative democracy and organisational efficiency, especially in the decision-making process. The tension recognised by Ziegler (1975, p. 8) between "delegate" and "trustee" orientations on "arena-secular" or "elite-sacred" boards continues. In his view, school boards "part commonweal, part service ... behave like typical schizophrenics." The dominant culture on the board will influence the distribution of power within the board, and whether or not that power is shared across a broad base, or whether it is reserved to a governing elite in the core activity of the board – its decision-making. Metz (1984, pp. 2-3) claims that the history of the education boards in the United States

shows a shifting emphasis between expectations that the board members are representatives of their constituents and expectations that the board members are experts in the business of school governance, trustees for the people.... During any given period there are demands on board members for both representation and expertise.

These issues go to the heart of any discussion on representation and the ability of any person or group to represent another or any constituency adequately, or at all. According to Wragg and Partington (1980, pp. 17-18), the parent or teacher on the board is not a delegate and should speak and vote as a thinking individual. Sallis (1980, p. 5) states that boards are expected to operate as corporate bodies in the best interests of the school and reach its decisions by majority vote if necessary. Coyne (1989, p. 28), suggested that the change in a Board member's orientation from representing community interests to being primarily committed vitality of the Board is critical to the success of the Board as a collective strategic body. Macbeth (1989, p. 129) took a similar position and argued that the social background of the parent representative was not as important as the skills he/she brought to the task.

It is his (*sic*) capacity to be well-informed, articulate, confident at committee work, skilful at handling people and conscientious in contacting the parents whom he represents that matter more than how 'typical' he is....

For Macbeth, the ability of the parent governor to represent cancelled out any bias he/she might bring to the task. Those who have the skills necessary for the task were not necessarily typical of the population being represented. The underlying issue is whether more democratically representative boards are more responsive.

The position adopted by Macbeth echoes that of Edmund Burke, quoted by Pitkin (1969, p. 175). Burke argued that representatives should maintain close links with those they represent but should also maintain their own independent judgement. The representative should not sacrifice "his unbiased opinion, his mature judgement, his enlightened conscience ... to any man." To do so would be a betrayal of his duty to the represented, to whom he owes "not his industry only, but his judgement."

Representation as a concept describes representatives, elected or appointed, acting on behalf of and in the interests of those who elected or appointed them. Operating out of a representational orientation representatives represent, they bargain, they negotiate, they attempt to resolve issues of substance in ways that promote the interests of those they represent. Operating out a "trustee" or "nominee" orientation, they put independent judgement regarding the interests of the organisation above sectional interests and put public interest first. Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses. Duffy (1996), cited in Murphy (1996, p.9), states that in his experience with Irish voluntary secondary boards, they "never divide along the line of religious nominees on one side and outsiders on the other." On the issue of representation on boards of management, he suggests that now "the bigger problem for school boards is almost invariably to find enough committed people of high calibre who are prepared to serve. It is more the quality of the people than who they represent that matter in practice (p.9)." The literature suggests that boards in general do not operate purely out of either perspective, though there is evidence that some groups or individuals on boards occasionally or habitually adopt one or other approach (Kogan et al., 1984; Pascal, 1987a and 1987b; Golby, 1990; Hanley, 1989).

In the empirical study a number of issues relating to the four concepts discussed in this section – orientation, responsiveness, legitimisation, representation - will be addressed:

- Do board members act as representatives of their nominating groups?
- Do they conduct themselves on the boards as their nominators would expect them?
- Is there formal contact and accountability to nominators?
- Does their decision-making reflect a nominee or representative orientation?
- Do members experience conflicts of loyalty?
- Is the board responsive to the concerns of members?
- Does board business reflect the interests and issues of all categories of members equally?
- Are members given equality of access to the board?
- Does the board consider broader community concerns?
- Are there issues that are regarded as "off-limits" by any board members?
- Is there a reflective and consultative approach to decision-making?

- Do members feel they are included in the internal environment of the board?
- Do members feel that the powers of the board are adequate to address their needs?
- Are difficult issues faced?
- Is board confidentiality respected?

Responsiveness, legitimisation, representation are indicators of orientation and processes that underpin participatory democracy. According to Bush (1995, p. 52) democratic and collaborative management assumes that organisations determine policy and make decisions using a process of discussion which keeps the values and objectives of the organisation in focus and leads to a decision by consensus rather than conflict. Internally, there is an investment in time, externally, the group is accountable for its decisions and their outcomes. Power is shared and the attendant cost is participation.

4.4.7. PARTICIPATION

As set out in the previous section, legitimisation is an expression of participatory democracy. The authority and influence of a board is related to its powers and the its legitimacy - its understanding of and its willingness to exercise the powers vested in it, with the consent of those in whose service the powers are used in a democracy. Responsiveness and legitimisation create a context for participation through giving reasons for its extension. The concept of representative democracy applied to the board invites the participation of the stakeholder constituencies through their nominees, and the nominees themselves in the activities of the board. Richardson (1983, p. 14) defines participation in terms of a bringing interested parties together for mutual discussions. But participation has to go further than discussions. In practice it can take many forms. Pateman (1970, pp. 68-71) described three levels of participation – pseudo, partial and full. At the level of pseudoparticipation, employees are persuaded to accept decisions that already have been made by the management (p.68). Partial participation is the equivalent of influence where the final decision rests with management after consultation; and full participation is where each individual member of the decision-making body has equal power to determine the outcome of decisions (p. 71). The review of the literature over the past thirty years, particularly in the United Kingdom, indicates that getting to the stage of "total participation" takes more than legislation.

Participation in practice can be a mixed blessing and may appear to offer more than it can deliver. Iannacone and Lutz (1970) argued that for most practical purposes the level of participation possible may be at most partial in representational terms. Actual community control may amount to no more than acceptance or rejection of a representative at the time of election or appointment. There is also the possibility that those who participate will be from the more active or articulate members of society who have the resources, the time and the confidence to become involved. Bacon (1978) found a reluctance among some parents to be become involved with boards of governors and there is evidence that this is continuing (TES, 1999). If most parents declined to become involved, there was a possibility that control of the system might fall into the hands of a group who might run it in their own interests, rather than in the general interest of the community.

How board members experience the culture of a board, and understand their role as board members and as boards can influence their participation on the board, as well as the exercise of its powers. Kerr (1964) described how new board members were socialised into a role orientation supportive of the administration's point of view. Cistone (1977) argued that the whole process of being appointed to a board served to create a particular outlook among new members and socialised them into established practices. Bacon (1978) found that the absence of role clarity resulted in new governors being subtly incorporated or socialised into existing power structures.

Participation and involvement can be hard to achieve for reasons not attributable to board culture. Bell (1989, p. 140) refers to what he terms "fluid participation." A member may decide to opt out, to avoid taking part in a decision or process, where there may a conflict of loyalties or a sense of alienation, or an unwillingness to become involved in issues outside one's own immediate concern. Burkey (1993, p.56) considers that while participation builds the capacity of people to have control over their own lives and destinies, reaching agreement on the formulation of objectives and actions may be slow and difficult, and demanding in personal terms. This was due to conflicting interests in the group. Participation requires organisation, yet organisations can easily become centres of focal power controlled by a few (Burkey, 1993, p.60).

Korsgaard et al. (1995, citing Schweiger et al. (1989), stated that the attachment the team members feel towards one another is important to the long term co-operation of a group and its ultimate effectiveness. They define attachment as the extent to which individuals feel themselves to be part of a team and look forward to working with other members. Lack of attachment "may exacerbate the tendency of members to pursue self-interest at the expense of reaching globally superior team-decisions." (p.61). The decision-making effectiveness of a group "... depends in part upon its members' co-operativeness in providing information and in fully airing differences in assumptions and interpretations (p.60)."

Wallace et al. (1990) stated that participation on a committee can be along a continuum from "no involvement" over seven stages to "total participation." At one end of the continuum teachers, parents or community representatives either show no interest, or are not given the opportunity to contribute, in the decision-making process. At the other end, all members of the team or council strive for consensus and share equally in the decision-making, with the principal as an equal member. In all the stages set out by Wallace et al.(1990), the prime determinant of the level of council involvement was the role adopted by or allowed to the principal. Moving from no interest to consensus decision-making can be slow and difficult depending of personal and organisational factors, including doubts about the value of the process.

Kogan et al. (1984) found many levels of participation with the principal, chairperson, and longer serving governors occupying an inner circle, and an outer circle of people who did not contribute due to some sense of inadequacy. Deem and Brehony (1992, p. 18), along similar lines, stated that their research suggested strongly that governors divided into two groups - a small active core and a much larger, inactive, periphery. Golby (1985, p. 51) found different levels of cohesion and partnership on governing bodies. Head teachers were perceived as often having not always overtly, a controlling influence on meetings of the governors, through their liaison with the chairperson and through their reports to the governors. In the case of parents, Golby (1985, 1989) found that their role was not always clearly understood by themselves or others, and their influence seemed directly related to their articulation, background or personality. He found (1985, p.23) that their participation related more to their professional status, than to their "... contribution as parents or members of the local community." According to Pascal (1987a, p. 93ff.), there were problems around the issue of partnership in the wider educational system as well as on school governing bodies. Power continued to be distributed unevenly between different elements throughout the system and was vested in groups. Morgan (1990, p. 83-90) reported that governors felt inhibited from making worthwhile contributions at governor's meetings because of the perceived dominance of a particular group at the meeting. Kogan et al. (1984), Golby (1985) and Pascal (1987a) agreed that many parents were not interested in becoming involved in school governance.

Hurst (1985, p. 84) expressed doubts about the advisability and functionality of partnerships in devolved educational structures. He argued that teacher participation in policy-making and their long-term commitment to policy implementation was not likely to occur under decentralisation. He suggested that communal decisions were compromises that suppressed justifiable doubts. Participants were, in effect, forced to take decisions in the context of the group that they might have

believed to be poor decisions from either a personal or professional perspective. He also suggested that wide participation might give those who oppose reform, often unjustifiably, an effective veto. Angus (1989, p. 20) distinguished between "participation seen as community involvement or control, and participation as an aspect of corporate management." He argued that teacher and community participation, presented as contributing to greater democracy, had not necessarily resulted in changing traditional administrative hierarchies or entrenched power relationships. Deem and Brehony (1992, p. 18) stated that in their findings, there was no indication "of partnerships between governing bodies as a whole and their schools, or even between large sub-groups of governors and school staff..." They suggested that the increased powers of boards of governors and the implication of a hierarchical relationship between governors and schools does "not make for a consensual relationship in many cases." (p.25). The findings of Shearn et al. (1995) suggest that even in the changed environment of school governance in the United Kingdom resulting from the education reform acts matters had not changed significantly.

Golby (1985, p. 51) found different levels of cohesion and partnership on governing bodies. Head teachers were perceived as often having, not always overtly, a controlling influence on meetings of the governors, through their liaison with the chairperson and through their reports to the governors. In the case of parents, Golby (1985, 1989) found that their role was not always clearly understood by themselves or others, and their influence seemed directly related to their articulation, background or personality. He found (1985, p.23) that their participation related more to their professional status, than to their "... contribution as parents or members of the local community."

Participation at the level of the board implies full participation in the terms set out by Pateman (1970). At its centre is an expectation that those involved in the process have a level of control over the process. This means that they have access to information and to decision-making, as well as to any bargaining process through which people may influence decision-making in the context of the responsibilities of the board. Access should cover the right to submit their views and to explain or defend them at the board meeting. The empirical study queries the forms of participation used by members at board meetings and whether member participation is facilitated and in terms of time, opportunities to make input and to be involved in board business.

The form participation will take on a particular board will relate also to such factors as received practices, traditions, attitudes, values, experiences, personal relationships among others. These add up to a board culture supportive of participation. How board members are introduced to their duties and incorporated into their role affects their orientation, as well as the level and effectiveness of their

participation. This is a factor of training.

4.4.8. TRAINING

Kerr (1964), Ziegler and Jennings (1974), Cistone (1975 and 1977) refer to the concepts of socialisation and inculturation of members of school boards. Socialisation in this context refers to the introduction and the formative process of new members to the board that may influence their orientation and behaviour on the board. They accept that a particular culture is present on boards. Schein (1985, quoted in Gonder and Hynes, 1994, p. 13), described this culture in terms of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by the members on boards, that operate unconsciously and define in a "taken for granted" fashion how the boards see themselves and their environments. They imply that the way new members are induced into this culture, and by whom, will have a strong influence on their behaviour as board members. According to Kerr (1964), new members were inducted by the superintendents and experienced members. The dominant thrust of this process was oriented towards an understanding of the professional point of view. In the view of Ziegler and Jennings (1974), this point of view dominated the boards. Cistone (1977, p.31) found that the process started well before new members joined their boards "as a consequence of recruitment, preincumbent experience, and anticipatory socialisation." Cistone places greater emphasis on forms of anticipatory socialisation than on the role of the professionals on the board (p.21) as major formative influences on new board members.

Bacon (1978) found that the absence of role clarity resulted in new governors being subtly incorporated or socialised into existing power structures. He claimed (1980, p. 91) that governors in his Sheffield study had been socialised into an understanding and practice of their role that was acceptable to the principals, particularly in matters that were deemed to be "... the appropriate professional concern of the headteacher and his staff... ." Hanley (1989) found that parent representatives on primary school boards were victims to a socialisation process determined by principals and chairpersons. The perception was that boards, once established, were strongly resistant to change, and that on many boards there was an inertia born out of custom and practice, established roles or vested interests, which did not respond easily to members who might wish for greater involvement or might wish to introduce change.

Chapter two of this study underlines the growing complexity in the ever changing environment of boards. A strong theme in the literature is the need for orientation and training for board members to ensure that they have the skills, knowledge and attitudes that enable them to provide effective

governance in the interests of the school in a climate of change. The purpose of training is to enable the board members to understand and to carry out their duties and responsibilities more effectively in the context of the overall objectives of their boards. Without a clear understanding of their role, as well as skills to meet the responsibilities of that role, and to participate in the work of the board, it is difficult to see how their effectiveness can be improved. It would seem to be important that, along with being trained in the skills and informational aspects of board management, board members and boards need to keep themselves informed about wider trends and issues likely to effect their schools. They need to be aware of the broader social and educational environment in which they function. The boards are also expected to be change agents in their schools. The reality of change means that training and learning need to be an ongoing reality for board members, not a once off event. Training needs resources - time, finance, and expertise - and in terms of the objectives set for the board can be viewed more as an investment than a cost. The empirical study enquired how board members were introduced to their role as board members, whether they were formally introduced through briefing or informally through interaction with existing members. It enquired about their use of their seed documents, and whether they felt adequately prepared for their role. Training is an on-going process that facilitates participation and the efficient use of the board and its processes in the interests of all the parties.

4.4.9 BOARD PROCESSES

The challenge to the board is to establish consistent goals and policies for their school in circumstances of rapid educational, social and political change, and against a background of values that call for consultation and collaboration. This task creates demands on board members to give more time and effort to discussions and consultations. Boards are challenged to manage their time and set their priorities so that their primary leadership functions are not lost in a morass of trivia, "busyness" or inefficient or time-wasting processes. In relation to itself, the board of management has a responsibility to ensure that its own operations and structures function efficiently in serving its purposes in a way that reflects its value-system.

Providing the board structure or determining its role does not in itself guarantee the achievement of the overall objective for the board as a democratic unit, which is to get equitable, meaningful and appropriate involvement of parents and teachers with the trustees in the effective management of the school. The involvement of people should be equitable in the sense that all parents and teachers irrespective of factors such as social background or teacher union status should have equal access. It should be meaningful in the sense that they can influence important decisions; and appropriate

in the sense that the decisions are proper areas for their involvement and fall within their jurisdiction as a board of management.

The focus of the activity of the board is the board meeting. The meeting serves several purposes. As it is the means by which the board carries out it duties, its primary purpose is to transact business. It is also the forum for decision-making and for communications between the board members. Since the board meeting is the primary locus of board activity, the structures and processes surrounding it (e.g. agenda setting, timing, the principal's report to the board, board minuting) are of particular interest for this study as indicators of collaboration, participation, accountability and partnership. Successful meetings enable the board to conduct its business efficiently and provide decisive leadership. Related to this are the roles of and the relationship between the board officers - the Chairperson and the Secretary, who, in most cases, is also the principal of the school, particularly between meetings, and with the board at board meetings. The board meeting may be a useful window into the board and the forces at work in it. Given its broad remit, it seems reasonable to suggest that the board should also keep its own processes and policy-making under review.

Kerr (1964), Cistone, Bell (1989), Burkey (1993), Korsgaard (1995) refer to processes or internal factors, sometimes personal, that contribute to the internal working environment of the boards. The presentation of boards of management as nominated boards seems to underline that they are more than the sum of their members or their interests. Board members need to work effectively as groups. It is not just a matter of individual competencies or knowledge, however expert. Attitudes and values are also important in order to create a board ethos which encourages trust, mutual respect, constructive sharing of views, and which promotes objectivity. Working effectively as a group requires organisation and this requires effective procedures rooted in the value system of the group and that support its objectives. The empirical study addresses issues relating to the agenda-setting, information, and decision-making processes. What happens on boards is also a factor of board climate and culture. Climate and culture affect relationships and the influence members can have on the boards.

4.4.10. BOARD CLIMATE AND CULTURE

Climate and culture are distinct but related concepts that affect how well the board of management operates. Climate refers to the general atmosphere on the board. It is a factor of values and attitudes that reflect how board members feel about themselves and the board. Respect, trust, morale, cohesiveness, communications, opportunities for participation are taken as indicators of a positive climate. Culture refers to common understandings developed out of shared experiences that boards bring to their operations. These understandings tend to be taken for granted and operate in the background. The term, according to Schein (1985), quoted in Gonder and Hynes (1994, p. 13), refers to basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation. They operate unconsciously and define in a "taken for granted" fashion an organisation's views of itself and its environment. They are learned responses that are taken for granted because they solve problems repeatedly and reliably. Argyris (1986) described culture in terms of what gives meaning and identity to a group - what is visible and overt in the group, the values which are behind what is visible, and the assumptions which are often taken for granted and implicit. As a system of values and assumptions that can be objectified, or as a pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a culture informs and defines "… had a well defined set of guiding beliefs." In their view, a strong culture that captured and held new members was an essential feature for the success of an organisation. Culture is a complex phenomenon that sets markers for the exercise of power and rules for action within the board.

Iannacone and Lutz (1970, p. 29) concluded that boards had their greatest power at times of crisis, but at moments of less intensity, which was most of the time, policies tended to be arrived at by consensus and conflict was avoided. The findings in the literature thus far in the current study appear to fall with this conclusion, and suggests a pattern of basic assumptions, or a culture on the boards that allows the administrators and the educational specialists significant control.

Hosmer (1995, p. 379) argued that there was a widespread agreement on the importance of trust in human conduct, but that there appeared to be an equally widespread lack of agreement on a suitable definition of the concept. Hosmer reviewed two sets of literature – from organisational theory and from moral philosophy - in arriving at a single definition from the two intellectual traditions. He argued (p. 400) that trust was

 \dots the expectation by a person, group or firm of ethically justifiable behaviour – that is, morally correct decisions and actions based upon ethical principles of analysis – on the part of the other person, group, or firm in a joint endeavour...

As a definition, it begs many questions, but it does have an underlying assumption of an obligation by the two parties to a trust – the person trusting and the trusted person – to each other. It covers individual expectations, interpersonal relations, social and ethical norms of behaviour. Applied to the board structures, it implies co-operation, group-spirit, and the avoidance of opportunistic behaviours between members and groups. According to Das and Teng, (1998, p. 491), trust generates confidence. A low level of confidence may lead to suspicions and negative working relationships. The presence or absence of openness, personal agendas, commitment, and good social relationships may influence climate On the one hand, is there acceptance and support of members, and on the other is there openness and sharing on boards? Is there a group spirit and a sense of cohesiveness among members of the board? Is there an atmosphere of openness and trust at board meetings? How do members participate at meetings? These issues are addressed in the empirical study.

4.5 CONCLUSION

The particular focus of this study is the effectiveness of the boards of management as participatory management instruments in a sample of second level schools in Ireland. Chapter two discussed a trend is educational management based on decentralisation and school-based management. There is a move away from rigid, control-based bureaucratic hierarchies to less rigid structures based on the values of participatory democracy. These structures have the potential to be more responsive to local needs and to be adaptable to local environments. Among the expected outcomes of this trend are schools that are more responsible for their own performance and which involve and motivate teachers, parents, and the wider community to work together to address the needs of pupils in a creative and innovative way. The literature reviewed in chapter three, sourced in other jurisdictions and in primary school boards in Ireland, supports the claim that there is a significant gap between what the boards are expected to do in theory and what they actually do, and between this reality and what was expected by the policy-makers when they were established.

The local board of management or school council is the typical mechanism being used to bring the parents, the teachers, the school principal and the school trustees - and in some cases other local community members and students - together, either as nominees or representatives of their interest groups. They come together to consider issues and to make decisions within the parameters of their devolved authority and responsibility for the school. The board or council is a leadership and management group with responsibility for a limited range of decisions specified in their governing documents or terms of reference. The board of management in Irish schools falls generally within this broad framework. While their brief may not be broad relative to the boards and councils in the educational systems discussed in chapters two and three, they have a mandate to operate in a manner consistent with the broad principles of school-site governance which underpin these systems. This chapter has described the board of management structure in voluntary secondary and community school. The governing documents of the boards of management in Ireland, as discussed, evolved in

a relatively early stage of the movement to local responsibility and control. While they are compromise documents, agreed after a long and difficult negotiation and in many ways reflect a minimalist response to the values underpinning the devolutionary movement, they nevertheless contain a basic thrust around democratic values such as partnership and accountability. Their role has been developed significantly in the White Paper (Department of Education, 1995) and restated in the Education Act (Ireland) (1998).

Indicators of effectiveness vary across organisations, and there appears to be considerable confusion about its measurement. The discussion on effectiveness, in underlining the variety of approaches to defining organisational effectiveness, points to a multidimensional definition which recognises a local element in that definition. There is also a sense in which the definition of effectiveness depends on the interest stance of the person asked. In the context of a participative board-management style, which is viewed as collaborative, the authority of the board would seem to depend to a significant degree on the legitimacy of its powers. There is support for the use of a multiple constituency approach to its definition and measurement - an approach that includes the understanding of at least the primary interest groups. This approach includes the goals of the organisation, the influence of the different interest groups on whom the organisation depends in the setting and monitoring of these goals, and the effects of circumstances on their attainment. In this approach, it is suggested, different definitions of effectiveness and its evaluation held by interest groups can be accommodated. Related to the board of management as an organisation, its effectiveness may be assessed from the perspective of these interest groups - parent, teacher and trustees - and their priorities for the board. In this approach, conflicting dimensions of effectiveness can be taken into account in an integration of the differing definitions of effectiveness held by parents, teachers and trustees.

The chapter suggests that the effectiveness of the boards as vehicles for a collaborative and participatory management approach may be assessed using a range of issues that emerge from the literature on board operations in chapters two and three. Among these are the role the board plays - whether it is primarily a policy-making or administrative instrument, the orientation of board members and the relationships between the different groups and individuals on the boards and with their constituents, the responsiveness of the boards to their constituent groups, board processes, information and board decision-making, board climate and culture, and the commitment of boards to their own development. The following chapter will describe the design and the implementation of the empirical study around these issues.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE EMPIRICAL STUDY AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter describes the methods and procedures of the study and sets out its planning and implementation. Section One sets out the objectives of the study, and the particular issues that are being investigated in the context of the review of the literature outlined in the previous chapters. Section Two discusses the methodology of the study, the reasons for adopting the particular research approach used, and the development of the study instrument. Section Three describes the implementation of the study, and the analysis of the data.

5.1 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Tussing (1978, pp. 64-65) remarked that the 1960s "was a decade of remarkable innovation and institutional growth in Irish education. No type of educational institution came out at the end of the '60s as it went in at the beginning, and a number of new kinds of institutions were introduced." There was a growing consciousness of the role of education in society, the ability of the education being provided to meet new demands in the society, and a gradual recognition by schools of their interdependence with their environments. There were calls for reform of the educational institutions and for greater democratic control of these institutions that would allow parents and teachers make input into the determination of the policies that determined how the children of the community were educated. The development of the community schools and their new management structure based on a board of management in the 1970s, and the subsequent extension of the board of management concept to the voluntary secondary schools in the 1980s reflected these calls. Up until that time, an individual manager, clerical or religious, managed most of the voluntary secondary schools - a form of management still found in many of these schools. The boards of management, as eventually negotiated in both the community and the voluntary secondary sectors, were made up of nominees from three of the major interest groups in Irish education - the trustees of the school, the teachers, and parents. Since their introduction there has been little direct study carried out into the functioning of these boards or the extent to which they have achieved their objectives, and in particular their effectiveness as vehicles for their core value - participatory democracy. It is the aim of this study to address this issue. The central question for the study is:

What is the perception of board members as nominees of the primary stakeholders - parents, teachers, trustees - and the school principals on the effectiveness of the board as an instrument of participatory governance?

The following areas relating to a participatory governance style were identified and developed from the literature reviewed in the previous chapters. They will form the primary elements of the framework of the empirical study.

- 1. Role: Is the role of the board understood by the board itself, among the members, and among their nominators?
- 2. Policy or Administration: Do the boards provide leadership through the development policy for their schools?
- 3. Orientation: How do board members perceive the orientation of their boards, understood in terms of operating out of a nominee or delegate style?
- 4. Responsiveness: Do boards, in the perception of the members, communicate with, respond to, and involve their constituencies?
- 5. Accountability: Is the board itself accountable, and does it hold its school accountable?
- 6. Participation: Are the boards participatory and democratic in their ethos and activities and do they make decisions in a democratic manner?
- 7. Information: Is access to information open or restricted?
- 8. Relationships: Do the professional and lay members on the boards function in a relationship that can be characterised as a partnership?
- 9. Training and Support: Are board members prepared for their role and are their on-going training and support needs met?
- 10. Overall Effectiveness: Overall, are the board members satisfied, taking everything in account, with the overall effectiveness of their boards of management?

The study takes as a general and practical definition of effectiveness the degree to which the vision for the board of management as a participatory management structure for the school is understood and being achieved. The study focused on determining if there were notable differences expressed in terms of agreement or disagreement, satisfaction or dissatisfaction among the primary stakeholders on issues related to these areas.

5.2 THE APPROACH ADOPTED FOR THE STUDY

Boards of management have nominees from different constituencies – trustees, parents, and teachers. These may have different perspectives and expectancies of the board. In the absence of clear objectives, which are measurable, the satisfaction of constituency groups may be an important indicator of the overall effectiveness of boards. Following Hrebeniak (1978), Connolly et al. (1980), Zammuto (1982) and Hammer (1993), the use of a multiple constituency or stakeholder approach to understanding their effectiveness seems appropriate. Stakeholders are individuals or groups who can affect, or be affected by the actions of the board. This approach is the primary one adopted in this study. A stake is what a stakeholder stands to gain or loose. The stakeholders used in the study are limited to parent, teacher, and trustee groups who are directly represented on the board of management through their nominees. There are a number of reasons why a multiple constituency approach may be useful in the study of boards of management. Primary among these is the origin and nature of the boards themselves.

The boards were created in response to a desire for more participatory democracy in the management of schools. Trustee, parent, and teacher nominees, with the school principal comprise the board. These constituencies represented on the board, and the wider society, through the provision of resources and the creation of expectations, set an effectiveness context for the board and the school. Each of these interests has a high "stake" in the operations and outcomes of the board's management of their schools. In the absence of a clear definition of what constitutes board of management effectiveness, the nature of boards in an educational setting, and where clearly defined goals and measurable outcomes that can be quantified are not easily identifiable, if at all, a multiple constituency approach discussed in chapter four, section three above may be useful in evaluating the responsiveness of the boards and their effectiveness as vehicles for the views and values of the constituencies. This approach provides a means for ascertaining the opinions of the stakeholders, and for determining the extent to which their needs or desires are satisfied, thus providing an insight into dimensions of board effectiveness. Using the multiple constituency or stakeholder approach to determining effectiveness looks to stakeholders as the judges of effectiveness.

5.2.1 THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

One of the major issues in the debate about research methods relates to data collection - whether qualitative or quantitative methods should be used. The advantages and disadvantages of both methodological approaches are widely discussed (Bryman, 1988; Brannen, 1992; Zyzanski, 1992; Hammersley, 1992; Phillips, 1993). The *Oxford English Dictionary* definitions of "quantitative" are:

That is, or may be, considered with respect to the quantity or quantities involved; estimated or estimable by quantity. Relating to, concerned with, quantity or its measurement; ascertaining or expressing quantity.

The definition of "qualitative" puts "quantitative" as its opposite:

Relating to, connected or concerned with, quality or qualities. Now usually in implied or expressed opposition to quantitative.

Chamber's Dictionary (MacDonald, 1975, p. 1102) posits a similar opposition. It describes qualitative as "relating to, or concerned with quality, esp. opp. to *quantitative*." It describes quantitative as "relating to, or concerned with, quantity, esp. opp. to *qualitative*." In this either/or of qualitative versus quantitative research the characteristics and the shortcomings attributed to each approach are stated in strong oppositional terms (Bryman, 1988; Brannen, 1992; Zyzanski, 1992).

Qualitative research, it is argued, should be used when the objective is to understand in detail why a person does something or when the "research issue is less clear-cut and the questions to respondents likely to result in complex, discursive replies" and in exploring the world of the respondent in a flexible, imaginative and reflective manner (Brannen, 1992, p. 5). It indicates areas of consensus in the responses given, and the intellectual and emotional context out of which ideas or opinions are expressed. Miles and Huberman (1984, p.14) argue that qualitative data allow researchers to go beyond initial preconceptions and frameworks, by providing richer, more meaningful data that can be more convincing than "pages of numbers." The qualitative approach is criticised on the grounds that it lacks objectivity, that it is based on a relatively limited samples, that it is difficult to quantify or control data in its collection as well as analysis stages, and that the possibility of researcher bias is strong.

It is argued that the primary reason for conducting quantitative research is to learn how many people in a population have or share a particular characteristic or group of characteristics and to produce accurate and reliable measurements that allow for statistical analysis. Quantitative methods are seen as being more appropriate in capturing facts, "hard" data in the form of statistics and numbers. Quantitative research can also give a profile of people in similar circumstances and with the aid of statistics can help in generating models. Quantitative research tells "how many" and is not appropriate for learning why people act or think as they do. The principal value of the quantitative approach and its statistical methodology would seem to be its ability to point to inferences about the larger population based on the study of a sample of that population. The quantitative approach is criticised as being limited, abstract and one-dimensional in that it is unable to capture the perspective of the subjects of the study. Responses to them cannot always be taken at face value. They may be influenced by the form of the questionnaire, by the respondent's perception of the criticisms of the quantitative approach to research:

... social-survey research tends to distance the researcher from those whom he studies.... There is little direct contact with the groups being investigated, and no access to the social situations in which actors lead their day-to-day lives. The premium placed on hard quantifiable data contrasts with the interpretative involvement in ongoing social situation with a distinctly "softer" outcome in terms of the kinds of data it yields.

The ongoing debate over the relative merits of qualitative versus quantitative research, described in terms of inductive and deductive approaches (Hammersley, 1992), subjective and objective approaches (Morgan and Smircich, 1980), scientific and naturalistic (Abdel-khalik and Ajinkya, 1979) or as "paradigms" rather than methods (Westbrook, 1994), is not as defined as it might appear. Stenhouse (1980) concluded that the distinctions between the two approaches were illusory in that they belonged to the same family. Walker (1982, p. 197), drawing on a range of case studies, supports Stenhouse's argument (p. 45) that the "description of cases and the analytic categorisation of samples are complementary and necessary approaches in educational research." Levacic (1990, p. 137) states that the scientific-naturalistic distinction is a continuum along which one approach merges with the other. Hammersley (1992, p. 48) suggests that linking qualitative research methods with an inductive approach and quantitative methods with a deductive/hypothetical approach is an oversimplification of the issues involved. He states that, in his view, "all research involves both deduction and induction in the broad sense of those terms; in

all research we move from ideas to data as well as from data to ideas." (p.48). There is a variety of approaches and an interplay between them which places the researcher in a "complex maze" rather than at a crossroads which presents a clear choice between a qualitative or quantitative direction.

Research methods, it would appear, are not precise tools capable of being applied without adaptation to the aims and context of the research area. Miles and Huberman (1988, p. 223) contend "that researchers should pursue their work, be open to an ecumenical blend of epistemologies and procedures, and leave the grand debate to those who care most about it." In their view the debate is unlikely to be resolved in the short-term and research needs to be done. The differences between the two principal approaches are along a continuum rather than being in direct opposition to one another and have many similarities. Quantitative research predicts and controls the data being collected mainly through the use of "instruments" to measure the constructs under study. Qualitative research attempts to capture and analyse the content and quality of behaviour. It seeks to capture a depth to an event or action that quantitative methods cannot. Both approaches make interpretations of the events being studied. Both approaches develop a framework within which an analysis is based. In both, data are filtered to some degree, at least in the attempt to determine an interpretation for them. Phillips (1993, p. 69) argues that both qualitative and quantitative forms of research are subject to a variety of threats to their validity. Of qualitative researchers, he states that they

... are liable to misjudge the frequency rate of certain behaviours ... are likely to be unduly influenced by positive instances and not so sensitive to the significance of negative instances... to be influenced or "anchored" by experiences undergone early in the research, and so on. To ensure objectivity within a paradigm, then, the researcher has to ensure that his or her work is free from these problems, and again the presence of a critical tradition is the best safeguard... when researchers try honestly to refute their own dearly held beliefs, then bias and other obvious shortcomings are likely to be eliminated....

Whatever approach is used, the outcomes are subject to critical evaluation and researchers "are forced to answer their critics." (Phillips, 1993, p. 6).

The appropriate research approach would seem to involve a balance between both methods, determined by the objectives and circumstances of the research. Irrespective of the approach, as Phillips suggests, there are problems. Johnson (1984, p. 6) comments that "the fundamental

principle of planning effective research is to match the research design to the resources available for its completion, and to particular characteristics of the topic under consideration." Citing Silvey (1975), she argues that at best a research plan is a compromise between "the aims of the research, the resources available and the feasibility of the area of study." The research method used should take account of the time available for its execution, the amount of help that can be recruited, and the special requirements of those whose activities are being studied. These considerations were taken into account in determining the approach and the methods used in the current study.

In the current study a questionnaire survey approach is used, based principally on quantitative research methods with a facility for respondents to elaborate on their overall response by way of written comments if they so wish. A number of factors, theoretical and practical, led to this decision. In the literature review, a series of key issues were identified which depicted an ideal type for an effective board of management. From this ideal type, a range of indicators which are quantifiable, and which can give rise to critical reflection on the operations of the boards are identifiable. The data sought are opinions, attitudes and personal perceptions of effectiveness. This type of information is accessible by a questionnaire or by an interview. The writer (Mungovan, 1994) combined aspects of qualitative and quantitative data collection in his case study of a school board of management. One lesson from that study was the amount of time and the expense which had to be expended on each interview, given that board members were spread over a wide geographical area, their limited availability, and the reluctance of some to subject themselves to an interview. In the current study, qualitative research using personal interviews was not practical given the national geographical spread of the subjects of the study, the attendant cost, and principally the time constraints on the writer. This study is an initial exploration of the research area. In the circumstances and given that the information being sought appeared accessible through this method, it was determined that a self-reporting questionnaire was the most economical and efficient method of surveying a sample of a large population in different parts of the country.

5.2.2 INSTRUMENT

The literature review has examined the vision set for school boards, the evolving context in which they operate, and how they operate in practice. In terms of vision, the role of the board is seen as

primarily concerned with determining policies for its school and less with dealing with administrative matters. In its deliberations it is concerned with the corporate interest of the school more than the sectional interest of its constituent groups. It functions in a constructive relationship characterised by partnership that respects the legitimate roles and responsibilities of its constituent groups. It maintains contact with and responds to the needs and the views of its nominating groups. It is well informed, not only about the immediate concerns of its school, but also about the external environment of the school in its school community and wider educational trends that may impact on the school or the board. It relates to the school principal and his/her role relative to the board and the school in a coherent and independent manner. The board is accountable to its stakeholders and has a responsibility to hold its school accountable. Reflecting the equal status of all its members, there is equal access for the members to all its processes The board is participatory and democratic in its ethos and activities. In its decision-making processes in particular, it functions according to procedures that reflect participatory values, and that are inclusive. There is a commitment on the part of the board's trustees and the board itself to its own self-development and training.

Spurred on by concerns over economic competitiveness and perceived deficiencies within the education systems themselves, the context of educational governance is changing. Within a reconceptualisation of government along entrepreneurial lines, decentralisation has become a key organisational principle for much of the education reform movement. The decentralisation structures are taking many forms. School-based management in many different forms is one decentralisation strategy. Significant authority is being devolved to school-based governance structures such as councils, boards of governors, and boards of management. Parental choice of school is promoted to generate competitiveness and as a reform tool. The goal for many of the initiatives is to promote innovation, to allow schools to be more responsive to parents' wishes and students' needs in a changing society, to encourage schools to be more accountable and to use their resources more efficiently and effectively. Participation, shared-responsibility, relevance, effectiveness and accountability are key concepts in this environment.

There are concerns and problems about the practical application of the principles stated for the revision of the structures. Dismantling central structures is not of itself sufficient to stimulate innovation at the level of the school. Traditional dependencies within the system and the school, old style administrator approaches and administrative systems, the cultural and institutional ethos

of schooling need to be addressed. Effective school councils, boards of governors, or boards of management expected to function within the new ethos of governance are proving difficult to create. In this new ethos members must shift roles, and invest considerable time and energy. In practice, within many of the revised management structures there is a failure to use the new devolved powers to their full potential. The vision is not being translated into practice.

Boards of management are currently in use in the majority of voluntary secondary and all community schools. The boards in both voluntary secondary and community schools include parent, teacher and trustee nominees appointed or elected to the board by their respective constituencies/nominators. The principal is a non-voting member of the board. The study focused on the perceptions of the nominees and the principals, from their perspectives as board members, of the effectiveness of their boards as they were functioning at the time of the study as instruments of participatory governance. The instruments used in the study were constructed around the following themes generated from the literature review.

- 1. Role: The perceived level of understanding of the role of the board among the boards, board members and their nominating groups as perceived by the board members.
- 2. Policy or Administration: The ability of the board to provide leadership through the development of policy for their schools.
- 3. Orientation: The operating style of the board and board members understood in terms of nominee or delegate orientations.
- 4. Responsiveness: The responsiveness of the board to its constituencies.
- 5. Accountability: The accountability of the board and its willingness to hold its school accountable.
- Participation: The participatory processes of the board especially in relation to decisionmaking.
- 7. Information: The access to information on the board open or restricted.
- 8. Relationships: The professional/lay relationship on the board, including the board/principal relationship.
- 9. Training and Support: The training and support provided for the board.

Two separate questionnaires were used – one for nominees and a separate one for the principals. The essential difference between the two questionnaires was one of perspective on the operations of the boards. Items in the questionnaire for nominees tended to be phrased in the first person e.g. "I rarely disagree openly with other members at board meetings." Items in the questionnaire for principals tended to be phrased in the third person e.g. "Members of the board rarely disagree openly with one another." The majority of the items in both questionnaires were closed. The two open questions give a limited scope for the respondents to express feelings and attitudes or make comments about the effectiveness of their boards. The majority of the closed items required that the respondent express agreement or disagreement, satisfaction or dissatisfaction, along a four point Likert-type scale with explicit points of view.

Johnson (1984, p. 11) states that research instruments need to be tested from several aspects their structure, how they are to be administered, the time needed to complete them, the subsequent analysis that will be applied to the data. For Connell and Khan (1968) the efficient communication of information from the respondent to the researcher is the primary purpose. In this communication, they identify three elements - language, frame of reference and the level of difficulty of the question. Connell and Khan's concern with clarity is echoed by Hoinville and Jowell (1978, pp. 127-130). They state that a good postal questionnaire should be capable of being completed by respondents who may have little experience of filling forms. It should not be too long, be well laid out and attractive, using boxes to be ticked rather than numbers to be circled, and be clearly worded. Questions should use clearly marked sub-sections if necessary. The more difficult questions should be in the middle or towards the end. Instructions should be explicit. There should be room for respondents to add comments on the questionnaire. Respondents should be thanked for their co-operation in completing the questionnaire and asked to return it promptly. The following section describes the development of the questionnaires and the pilot study.

5.2.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE INSTRUMENT AND THE PILOT STUDY

In its first draft, the questionnaire for nominees was set out in nine sections and sought one hundred and forty responses over ninety-seven items under the following headings: The questionnaire for the principals was also set out in nine sections. It sought one hundred and thirty two responses to ninety-two items. The headings for the sections were as follows:

- 1. Introduction: Background Information.
- 2. Role.
- 3. Orientation
- 4. Responsiveness
- 5. Accountability
- 6. Information
- 7. Processes
- 8. Training
- 9. Overall Effectiveness.

The questionnaires, together with a proposed covering letter, was administered by way of a pilot study to twelve nominated board members – four trustee nominees, four parent nominees, four teacher nominees - in March of 1997. Two principals completed the questionnaire designed for the school principals – one from a voluntary secondary and one from a community school. The participants were selected on the basis of their experience on boards, their perceived independence, and their varied backgrounds as representatives of the different categories of board member. They were invited to respond to and comment on the questionnaire bearing in mind the language used and the frame of reference – their understanding of the language and constructs used, the length of time it took them to complete it, particular problems they experienced in completing it, its layout. They were asked to respond inside two weeks. All the participants had responded within one month.

The covering letter was accepted as satisfactory. In general, the responses to the questionnaire were positive with one major exception – its length and the time it took to complete. This related to the number of items included in it, as well as to the complexity of some of the issues. Minor amendments to the wording of a small number of statements to enhance their clarity were suggested. One item differentiated between the chairperson and board members. It was suggested that this was incorrect in the particular context and could cause confusion. A multiple item (Item 19 of final draft of the questionnaire) dealing with issues raised at board meetings was considered too complex and potentially confusing. In this item, respondents were invited to indicate the regularity with which particular issues were raised at meetings, and also to indicate the level of discussion generated by the issues by using a score ranging from 1 to 4. It was decided, based on the responses, not to invite respondents to use the scoring element of the item. Another multiple

item relating to role was also removed because of difficulties encountered by some of the respondents. In their view, some of the statements used in the item were ambiguous and could give rise to difficulties in their interpretation.

The information from the pilot study was used to substantially revise the questionnaire. As length was a major issue, it had to be addressed. Dividing the questionnaire into two separate but shorter questionnaires to be administered to eighty schools boards was considered. In this arrangement forty schools would be sent a questionnaire relating to four of the main areas of the study. A further forty schools would get a questionnaire related to the other areas. This approach was considered to be too cumbersome. It was dismissed in favour of shortening the questionnaires. The analysis of the pilot data showed a difficulty with the grouping of items under "role." Two independent sets of data had been included in the one category. The headings were revised and extended to eleven – an introductory section and ten main sections.

The introductory items of the questionnaire were designed to obtain data on the type of board, the category of respondent, experience the respondents might have had prior to the being appointed or elected to the board that could be relevant to their current role, their length of service on the board, and their gender. The principals were invited to indicate the type of board, their length of service, and their gender. The purpose was to collate general data only about the respondents.

Section One queried whether there was an understanding of role of the boards at the level of the board itself, its members, and among the stakeholder groups that nominated the board members. Principals were invited to respond from their perspective on whether they agreed that the boards, the nominees and the nominating groups understood the role of the board.

Section Two focused on the thrust of the boards' activities. The statements addressed to the board members were designed to get an indication whether their boards, in their view, were concerned primarily with the strategic or organisational dimensions of their role. Did they have a clear and shared vision? Were they active in developing policy? In their deliberations which issues got priority – those dealing with strategy, with education, or with routine/administration? Did their ongoing concerns, the issues that got most attention at meetings, show them to be operating pro-actively out of a strategic/policy agenda, or out of an administrative agenda? In

their questionnaire, the principals were invited to respond to similar items seeking their views of their boards.

Section Three addressed the issue of board style. Do board members act primarily as representatives of their nominating groups? Do they conduct themselves on the boards as their nominators might expect them to, conscious of their responsibility to account to their nominators, or as nominees acting more according to a personal understanding of issues and school needs? Are they willing to compromise when interests come into conflict? Did the board face or evade difficult issues? Did they approach issues from a consultative and reflective stance? Was board confidentiality maintained? In their questionnaire, the principals were invited to respond to generally similar items giving their perspective on the issues.

Section Four sought information regarding the ability of the boards to take into account the needs of their primary constituencies, and to develop healthy relationships with them in responding collaboratively to needs. A responsive relationship between the board and its constituencies means that there are mutual responsibilities between the parties. Was there regular formal contact between the board and its stakeholder groups, and between the nominees and their nominators? Were reports provided to the trustees as the group to whom the board is responsible? Did the board spend time discussing the concerns of the wider community served by the school? Did members feel that there were issues that they wished to raise "off-limits"? Whose needs got priority at meetings – those of the professionals or of parents? Did the board respond to the issues of concern to the members? Were they willing to respond to difficult school issues? Did members feel that they had equality of access with other members to the board? Were the powers of the board adequate? In their questionnaire, the principals were invited to respond to generally similar items from their perspective.

Section Five dealt with accountability. To whom did the boards see themselves as accountable? Did they render accountability? At its meetings, did it monitor its own policies and plans, review the operations of the school including extra-curricular activities and school finances?

Sections Six related to member participation and to the decision-making processes. Participation assumes equality of access and participation on boards for all members. From the perspective of board members, were their board processes participatory and democratic in their ethos and in

their operation? In the perception of the different groups, did the boards function according to procedures that reflected the democratic and collegial values that underpinned their existence? Did members participate at meetings? What form did this participation take? Was sufficient time allowed for effective participation? Were members free to express their views, and were their views taken into account in decision-making? Did members contribute to the board agenda? Decision-making is the main focus of board activities. Did all nominee groups contribute at meetings, or were some groups or person seen as dominant? The climate and the culture that characterise the board also influence board operations. The presence or absence of openness, personal agendas, commitment, and good social relationships influence climate. Is there a group spirit, and a sense of cohesiveness among the members of the board? Is there an atmosphere of openness and trust at board meetings? Similar items were addressed to the principals in their questionnaire.

Section Seven sought data on information. The board needs a broad range of up-to-date information about the school and the context of its operations. Good information is the lifeblood of the board. A number of items of the questionnaires related to the information and information processes within the board. Did members feel that they had sufficient information about the board and the school? Did they have equality of access to information? Were they well informed about wider educational issues? Had they sufficient understanding of the technical information needed to manage the school? Were they proactive in seeking out the information they needed? Were there formal exchanges between the board and its constituencies concerning board activities?

Section Eight was designed to assess the relationship between lay and professional members of the board. Do board members feel that there is a positive working relationship between the professionals (principal and teachers) and the laity (trustee and parent nominees) on the board? This general issue was addressed in a number of questionnaire items relating to the influence of the professionals on the board. Was there an acceptance of and respect for both lay and professional contributions to board business? Whose interests get priority at board meetings – parents or professional interests? What was the level of influence of the administration on policy? Was there a dependence on the professionals? Had both lay and professional members equality of access to the board? Were issues being dealt with by the administration that ought to be brought to the board? Would the board be prepared to overrule the principal?

-187-

Section Nine was designed to elicit information on training. Initial and on-going training reflects the commitment of the board members and their trustees to their own self-development as self-reliant and confident partners charged with an important task. How do board members perceive their preparation for their role? As boards are appointed by their trustees, it would seem reasonable to expect that trustees would ensure that they are given an introduction to the work of the board and be briefed on their role and responsibilities. It would seem reasonable to expect that they would be briefed on all aspects of the school for which they are responsible. They need more than informal discussions and observation of how things are done. They need to have a sufficient understanding of the technical information needed to manage the school, to consult their terms of reference (Deed of Trust, Articles of Management), and, in general, to feel adequately prepared for their role as board members. Respondents were invited to respond to these issues. Similar issues were addressed to the principals in their questionnaire.

Section Ten drew together the main themes of the questionnaire. There are interrelationships between all the aspects of the operations of boards set out in the previous sections. While views may differ on the particular aspects, on balance what was the perception of the board members of, and their faith in, the effectiveness of their boards? Respondents were also invited to suggest how their boards might be made more effective in managing the school. They were also invited to make further comments.

Overall, the length of the questionnaires was reduced by one-third by limiting the number of items assigned to each grouping. Where it was considered that there was a similarity between two items, one was removed on the understanding that the remaining item could serve as an indicator in more than one area. As an example, the presence or absence of conflict at board meetings could be used as an indicator of the orientation of the board and as an indicator of the decision-making process on the board when taken in conjunction with other items. In the final analysis of the data, some of these items were missed. Their use would have given a more nuanced picture, but their absence did not alter the general picture. For example, a nine-point item relating to the contribution the board made was excluded. This item was intended to measure the type of role the boards were playing – advisory, supportive, accountable, decider of policy – based on the Kogan et al. (1984) model of board operations. The information sought through this item was obtained in the analysis of items relating to board operations.

Following consultation with the supervisor of the study, it was agreed that the headings would be removed from the next draft of the questionnaire and the statements repositioned so as to avoid potential contamination in the responses. In September 1997, the penultimate draft of the questionnaire was given to five board members - two parents, one teacher, and two trustees. Four were members of the original pilot group. The principal's questionnaire was given to a community school principal. There was still some unhappiness about the length. In the view of two members of the group, the apparent simplicity of the language was not indicative of the time required to respond. Otherwise, the questionnaire was completed satisfactorily and without difficulty. The issue of the length was considered again. The removal of item 75 relating to overall effectiveness was considered on the basis that it included some repetition. While it would have removed thirteen sub-items and made the overall questionnaire look shorter, it would not have made a significant difference to the time required for their completion. It was not removed. After minor adjustments in layout, it was decided to proceed with the administration of the questionnaire without altering its length. The participants in the pilot study were not involved in the subsequent study. A copy of each of the questionnaire for nominees is included in appendix one, and a copy of the questionnaire for principals is included in appendix two.

5.2.4 THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

5.2.4.1 SUBJECTS OF THE STUDY

The subjects of the study were drawn from the trustee, teacher and parent nominees, as well as the principals of a sample of voluntary secondary and community schools. In the 1994/95 school year there was a total of 452 voluntary secondary schools, of which 128 were for boys only, 163 were for girls only and 161 were for boys and girls. There were 60 community schools, of which 2 were for boys only and 58 were for boys and girls. The average enrolment in a voluntary secondary school was 499 pupils. It was 692 in a community school.

A sample of schools was drawn using the following criteria:

1. To be included, a voluntary secondary school had to have been managed by a board of management for at least three years. This was to ensure that there was a level of experience within the respondent board. To determine the schools in the voluntary sector that were

managed by boards for at least three years, two lists of schools were compared. One list referred to the 1994/95 school year. The second list referred to the 1997/98 school year. Only those schools that had chairpersons listed for both the school years were included. The Conference of Managers of Catholic Secondary Schools and the Joint Managerial Board had made these lists available. Boards had managed all the community schools surveyed for at least three years.

- 2. In order to maintain a commonality between the schools, two criteria were set:
 - (a) The school had to be a day school providing education for both boys and girls.
 - (b) The enrolment of the schools was between 400 and 800 hundred pupils.

With reference to enrolment, the following process was used. According to the official figures produced by the Department of Education and Science (1997), the average enrolment of a secondary school was 499 pupils. The average enrolment of a community school was 692 pupils. Adding the average enrolment for the two categories of school (692+499), dividing the result by 2, and rounding out to the nearest hundred gave an figure of 600 pupils. This was used as a central enrolment figure around which the sample was determined. Taking an upper figure of 700 and a lower figure of 500 along with the other criteria did not yield an adequate short list of schools. The upper figure was then extended to an upper limit of 800 pupils and the lower figure was extended to 400 pupils. This yielded a list of thirty-three voluntary secondary schools and forty-seven community schools. The final list of boards used in the study was drawn from this list of voluntary secondary and community schools. It was determined according to the following process.

Each school on the list was identified by its official roll number taken from the *List of Post-Primary Schools* (Department of Education, 1997). This number was written on a card. The cards were drawn from a box and the roll numbers were listed in the order drawn. The target group sample size was 40 boards - 20 voluntary secondary boards and 20 community school boards comprising in total 160 trustee nominees, 80 parents, 80 teachers and 40 principals. A telephone approach was made to the principal/secretary of each board as it appeared in the listed order until an acceptance to participate was secured from twenty principals from each sector.

Where it was possible to speak with the principal, an outline of the study was presented to him/her. He/she was invited to accept a package of materials for distribution to the board members, and to complete a questionnaire himself/herself. If, after three attempts, it was not possible to make contact with the principal, the next school on the list was contacted. The majority of the principals in both types of school asked about the length of the questionnaire and the length of time that it would take to complete it. Ten enquired about the confidentiality of the exercise. Most agreed to participate immediately, while some took the matter under consideration. Three refused to participate. One gave no reason, while two complained that they were being inundated with questionnaires. They did not have the time. In all, twenty-one voluntary secondary schools agreed to participate. The target number of twenty was exceeded because a principal, who had taken the matter under consideration, agreed after some time to participate. A listing of twenty community schools was compiled using the same process. The questionnaires, together with a covering letter and a stamped self-addressed envelope, were sent in packages to the principal/secretary of each participating board on April 1st, 1998. There was a covering letter with the package addressed to the Principal/Secretary. He/she was asked to distribute the material to the board members. In most cases, this was done at the board meetings, and in some cases, they were sent by post to the members of the board by the Secretary. A letter setting out the purpose of the study and seeking support was sent to the Association of Managers of Catholic Secondary Schools, the Joint Managerial Board and the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools. Copies of these letters are included in appendix three. Prior to the commencement of this exercise, consideration was given to the possibility of making direct contact with the board members through their schools. As there was no central register of board members in the public domain, this was not possible.

On each board of management, there are parent, teacher, and trustee nominees. The school principal is a non-voting member of the board and in all the boards used in the study he/she acts as secretary to the board. The subgroups in the population fall into four homogeneous categories - parents, teachers, trustees, and principals. There is a difference in the composition of the boards in the two sectors in the case of trustee nominees - six trustee nominees in the case of the community schools boards and four trustee nominees in the case of the voluntary secondary schools boards. On the community school boards, there are trustee nominees from different church related groups and the local Vocational Education Committee. In the case of most of the voluntary secondary schools, the trustees are from a single trustee group. There was no

-191-

differentiation made between the different categories of trustee nominees on the boards. In all, 200 questionnaires were sent to nominated board members on community school boards, and 20 questionnaires were sent to the principals of these schools. A total of one hundred and seventy six questionnaires were sent to the nominated members on voluntary secondary school boards, and twenty-one questionnaires were sent to the principals of these schools.

5.3 RESPONSE AND ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

5.3.1 RESPONSE

The survey instrument was circulated to 20 community school boards and 21 voluntary secondary school boards on April 1st, 1998. The deadline for return of the completed questionnaires was May 1st 1998. By May 5th 1998, the return was as follows:

Table 5.1	Preliminary response to questionna	ires	
Voluntary Se	econdary School Board Members	30%	
Voluntary Se	econdary School Principals	65%	
Community	School Board Members	28%	
Community	School Principals	65%	

A letter was written to the principal/secretary of each participating Board on May 5th thanking him/her for assisting with the study, and the board members for their responses to date, outlining the scale of the overall response, and inviting those who had not responded to do so. As the material was being distributed at board meetings in most schools, it was appreciated that its distribution could not take place until a meeting was held. As the schools were due to close at the end of May, the writer made telephone contact with the principals/secretaries of those schools from which no response or a low response had been received. There was an assurance from all the principals who could be contacted that they would co-operate. It proved impossible to make contact with three principals. As anticipated, sending material to Board members without having individual contact made follow through difficult. The time of year was a particularly busy one for principals and for boards due to the implementation of the revised in-school management structure. Responses continued to arrive through June and July 1998.

Responses were received from 19 community school boards and 20 voluntary secondary school boards. It appears that the survey instrument was not circulated locally to the members of the two boards from whom responses were not received. Overall, the rate of response from board nominees was seventy percent and ninety percent from the principals. The final number of responses broken down by category or respondent and type of board is set out in the following table.

	Community		Voluntary Secondary		
	N	%	N	%	
No. of Boards	19 of 20	95	20 of 21	95	
Parent Nominees	29 of 38	76	28 of 38	70	
Teacher Nominees	27 of 38	71	32 of 38	80	
Trustee Nominees	72 of 120	63	57 of 80	71	
Total Nominee Response	128 of 190	67	117 of 160	73	
Principals	19 of 20	95	17 of 20	85	

Table5.2Final response to questionnaires.

5.3.2 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

As the completed questionnaires were received, they were checked and the data were entered into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. It was decided to present each item of the data initially in tabular form. A number of specifications for the tables were considered. The data fall into a number of categories – the different classes of respondent, the type of board, and the numerical and percentage response to the items by levels of agreement, or frequency or satisfaction as appropriate. It was decided that the table would present the overall findings for the particular item, broken down by category of respondent – parent, teacher, trustee, principal, and by type of school. A separate table was developed for most of the items in the questionnaires. The table presents the detailed response to the particular item. The following is a sample table.

Table 5.3Sample data table.

	Strongly	agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly	Disagree
Item 9								
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
VOLUNTAR	Y SECON	DARY						
PARENT	4	14	13	46	11	39	-	-
TEACHER	6	19	13	41	12	38	1	3
TRUSTEE	5	9	22	39	28	49	2	4
PRINCIPAL	9	53	6	35	2	12	-	-
COMMUNIT	Y							
PARENT	1	3	13	45	13	45	2	7
TEACHER	5	19	15	56	7	26	-	-
TRUSTEE	14	20	35	49	20	28	2	3
PRINCIPAL	8	42	11	58	-	-	-	-

As a board, we tend to approve policies presented to us by the school administration more than we develop board policies.

This table sets out the detailed response to item 9 of the questionnaire for nominated members. The response invited was to indicate strong agreement, agreement, disagreement, or strong disagreement with the stated proposition.

In the table, the number of the item is stated. This number refers to the item as it appears in the questionnaire for nominated members. The text accompanying the table will indicate the number of the item or a similar item as it appears on the questionnaire for principals. As there is not an exact correspondence between the two questionnaires, there are not corresponding items in all cases. The data from the two types of boards are presented in the table with the different categories of respondent listed vertically under each board type. The response itself is set out in rows horizontally under "N" denoting the number of respondents, and "%" denoting the percentage of the particular category of respondent. The row percentages should add up to 100%. They may not do so exactly in each case, since all the percentages were rounded in the tabulation.

The data from the study are organised and presented in ten sections in chapters six and seven. The opening section of chapter six sets out the data from items 1 to 5 of the survey issued to nominated members. These items collected basic background data about the respondents. Items 6 to 75 of the survey for nominees and items 4 to 77 of the questionnaire for principals were grouped according to the following issues:

-194-

1.	Understanding of the role of the board
2.	Policy or Administration
3.	Orientation - Nominees or Delegates:
4.	Responsiveness
5.	Participatory Procedures on the Board
6.	Information - opens or restricted communications
8.	Accountability
9.	Training
10.	Overall Effectiveness/

Chapter six will present and discuss role, policy or administration, orientation, responsiveness and accountability – issues that describe how board members relate to and experience their role. Chapter seven will set out the data relating to participation, information, training and support, as well as the overall satisfaction of board members with their boards under each heading. As presented, each section has a short introduction, followed by the tables setting out the data from the responses appropriate to the section. Each table is accompanied by a comment. The purpose of the comment is to present the main findings from the table. The comment will include a brief description of the general picture, and how this is reflected in each of the categories of respondent, as well as any variations or exceptions identified. At the end of each section, there is a summary and an analysis of the main outcomes that draws together the thrust of the findings from the items presented in the section comparing them with the literature reviewed in the earlier chapters. There is some overlap between the two chapters and between many of the themes e.g. decision-making processes on the board is an indication of orientation, as well as of how board members experience their boards as instruments of participatory management. Particular items of the questionnaires are used in more than one section as indicators of the issues under discussion.

5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has described the methods and procedures of the study and set out its planning and implementation. It has also indicated the approach that will be taken to the analysis of the data in chapter six and chapter seven. The following chapter will present and discuss four areas - role, policy or administration, orientation, responsiveness and accountability.

-195-

CHAPTER SIX

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA: ASPECTS OF THE ROLE OF THE BOARD

This is the first of two chapters that present an analysis of the data collected through the survey described in chapter five. The survey, using quantitative methods, sought data to be used in measuring and comparing the perceptions of board members and school principals on the effectiveness of their boards as instruments of participatory governance. The central question for this study is:

What is the perception of board members as nominees of the primary stakeholders – parents, teachers, trustees – and the school principals on the effectiveness of the board as an instrument of participatory governance?

The sample for the study included the following constituent groups:

- a) Parent, teacher and trustee nominees serving on voluntary secondary school boards,
- b) Parent, teacher and trustee nominees serving on community school boards,
- c) Principals of voluntary secondary schools serving as non-voting members of voluntary secondary school boards,
- d) Principals of community schools serving as non-voting members of community school boards.

The instruments used were two questionnaires – one administered to nominated board members and one to school principals. In all cases the principals were non-voting members and secretaries of their boards. In general, the questionnaire presented to board members and principals reflected the one presented to the principals. The majority, though not all, of the items overlapped. The questionnaire issued to the nominated members had 78 items, and the questionnaire issued to the principals had 79 items. Many of these items had several sub-sections. Each item presented nominated board members and principals with choices concerning their perceptions. For most items, there were four possible responses depending on the issue being queried:

1

The opening section (items 1 to 5) of the survey issued to nominated members collected basic background data about the respondents. Items 6 to 75 of the survey for nominees and items 4 to 77 of the survey for principals were grouped according to the following issues. These issues form the primary elements of the framework for the study:

1.	Role
2.	Policy or Administration
3.	Orientation - Nominees or Delegates.
4.	Responsiveness
5.	Participatory Procedures on the Board
6.	Information - open or restricted communications
8.	Accountability
9.	Training

The nature of the role of the board being exercised by the boards is a central theme running through the two chapters. This chapter will present the background data on the respondents, and will set out the data on the roles currently being played by the boards. It will deal with issues related to role understanding, policy or administration, orientation, responsiveness and accountability. Chapter seven will present the data on board processes – participatory procedures, information, training - and the perceived effectiveness of the boards overall.

6.1 DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

The background of school board members forms part of many of the studies of boards (Gordan, 1974; Bacon, 1978; Keohane, 1979; Golby and Brigley; 1988; Golby, 1993; Angus, 1989). They pointed to a strong middle class professional bias on school governing bodies. Boulter (1988, p.467), quoted by Thody (1990, p. 221), stated that governing bodies should extend their

membership beyond "retired people, married women and vicars." In the United Kingdom since the Education Act of 1988, there have been specific efforts made to encourage a more diverse membership on governing bodies. Ziegler and Tucker (1980, p. 110) described the stereotypical board member in the United States as upper middle class, male and middle aged. They also tended to be well educated and from a professional background, with significant experience of teamwork as members of other committees. Keohane (1979, p. 134) described the typical board member on primary school boards in Ireland as female and middle-aged.

The first five items in the case of the questionnaire administered to nominated members sought basic demographic information to provide a brief description of the respondent. These related to type of school board, the capacity in which each respondent was serving – parent, teacher, trustee nominee, previous experiences which may have been relevant to his/her current role, the length of time he/she had served as board member to date, and gender.

6.1.2 LENGTH OF SERVICE

Respondents were asked to indicate the length of service they had given as board members. The following tables indicate the length of service of the nominees on the community and voluntary secondary boards respectively.

P	arent	1	Teacher		Trustee	,	Total	
Term- Years	Ν	%	N	%	N	%	Ν	%
1 to 3	17	59	16	59	18	25	53	42
4 to 6	9	31	9	33	19	26	38	30
7 to 9	1	3.5	2	81	17	24	22	17
10 to 12	1	3.5	0	0	3	4	4	3
13-15	0	0	0	0	8	11	8	6
18	0	0	0	0	2	3	2	2
23	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1
Missing	1	3.5			4	6		
Total	29	100.5	27	100	72	100	128	100

Table 6.1 Length of Service on Community School Board	Table 6.1	Length of	Service on	Community	School	Boards
---	-----------	-----------	------------	-----------	--------	--------

Overall, the average length of service given on community boards was 5 years and 4 months. The longest serving members on the community school boards were the trustee nominees, and this was reflected in all the community school boards surveyed. The average length of service for parent and teacher nominees was 3.5 years, respectively, while for trustee nominees it was 6.9 years.

	Parent		Teacher		Trustee		Total	
Term-Years	Ν	%	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
1 to 3	16	57	24	75	21	37	61	52
4 to 6	9	32	2	6	20	35	31	27
7 to 9	2	7	2	6	9	16	13	11
10 to 12 e	0	0	3	10	4	7	7	6
16	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1
Missing	1	4	1	3	2	3	4	3
Total	28	100	32	100	57	100	117	100

Table 6.2 Length of Service on Voluntary Secondary School Boan
--

The overall average term for members on voluntary secondary school boards was 4.5 years. On average, parent nominees served for 3.8 years, teacher nominees served for 4 years and trustee nominees served for 5 years.

Of the principals, seventeen community principals and ten voluntary secondary principals responded to the item. The average service of a community principal was seven years and ranged from one to eleven years of service. The average service of the voluntary secondary principal was ten years and ranged from three to sixteen years.

Few parent or teacher nominees served in excess of two terms on the board. This may be related to the fact that parent and teacher nominees are usually elected, while the trustees appoint their nominees. In the case of the community boards, the length of service of the nominees of the Vocational Education Committees was reflected in the overall average length of service of the trustee nominees. In most cases, they were appointed for the term of their committee, and were in place since 1991 – over six years.

The longer tenure enjoyed by principals and trustee nominees may have an influence on board operations. In the view of a community teacher nominee:

> ... most members are new so only the Chairperson and Secretary may be practically familiar with workings of the board at the start of session - a pity as it takes a while to learn the ropes if meetings are irregular (Community Teacher Nominee).

In the view of a community school principal:

... the three year term for appointees is almost over by the time members get fully attuned to the workings of a school - 5 years might be a better length with changes being made at stages rather than all together (Community Principal).

In a comment that suggested a certain dependence and a greater sense of trust on trustee nominees as against parent or teacher nominees, a voluntary secondary school principal called for greater continuity of service in the case of the trustee nominees. In his view three years was very short if the nominees were "good members." Healy (1994, p. 48) suggested that principals "did not trust the process of selection and nomination to produce people willing or able to play a full role in their schools." This principal seemed to indicate a similar disquiet.

With a substantial turnover in parent and teacher nominees on the board, the confidentiality requirement relating to board business, and the longer term served by trustee nominees on average, maintaining continuity in leadership and planning when boards change would seem to fall to trustee nominees and the principal. This may have implications for the locus of power on boards, particularly if knowledge and experience of the board influence that locus.

6.1.3. EXPERIENCE

According to Raab et al. (1997, p. 149) the "cultural capital" that board members bring with them to the boards provides a partial explanation of their ability to handle information, take decisions, assume roles, and engage in external networking. Item three of the survey instrument invited respondents to indicate experience they had which could have relevance to their current role as Board members. Four closed responses were sought and respondents were asked to indicate as many as were appropriate. There were two open responses inviting information on professional or other experiences.

	Parent		Teacher		Trustee		Total	
	N	%*	Ν	%	N	%	N	%
Elected Public or Voluntary Group	27	21	11	9	42	33	80	63
Prior school involvement	20	16	20	16	33	26	73	57
Experience/Teacher	5	4	27	21	46	36	78	61
Experience/Ed. Admin	1	1	4	3	25	20	30	23

Table 6.4

Background Experience - Voluntary Secondary School Boards

	Parent		Teacher		Trustee		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Elected Public or Voluntary Group	15	13	6	5	23	20	44	38
Prior school involvement	15	13	20	17	29	25	64	55
Experience/Teacher	4	4	31	26	30	26	65	56
Experience/Ed. Admin	0	0	2	2	16	14	18	15

A majority of the community school board respondents and a minority of voluntary secondary respondents indicated that they had experience as members of an elected public (statutory) or voluntary body. Almost all the parent nominees on community boards, and a small majority of those on voluntary secondary boards had experience on such a body. A minority of teacher nominees on both boards indicated that they had experience. A majority of the trustee nominees on community boards and a minority of those on voluntary secondary boards indicated that they had such experience. A substantial number of nominees, particularly in the case of the community boards, brought an experience of collaborative work from other areas to their boards. The majority of parent nominees on both boards, but particularly on community boards, had experience of such work. The difference in the number of trustee nominees with experience as members of voluntary or statutory bodies between the community and voluntary secondary boards may be explained, at least in part, by the fact that many of the vocational educational nominees on the community school boards were political appointments. Most of the trustee nominees from the vocational education committees were appointed to their boards in 1991 and had over six years service at the time of the study (1998). This was not the case with the voluntary secondary school boards.

The overall response indicated that there was a substantial level of involvement of board members with their schools prior to their nomination as board members. More parent nominees on community boards than those on voluntary secondary boards indicated this involvement. All teachers had an involvement because of their role in the schools. The percentage of trustee nominees that indicated an active involvement was higher on voluntary secondary than community boards, but only by a margin of four percent. The percentage of parent nominees on community boards that indicated an active involvement was particularly high. Given the number of board members that indicated an involvement with the school prior to their nomination, it seems reasonable to expect that they brought with them a degree of experience and a knowledge of the school that assisted them and their boards.

Overall, including teacher nominees, the majority of board members on both the community and voluntary secondary boards had a background in, or related to teaching. Excluding teacher nominees, 40% of the community board members, and 29% of the voluntary secondary board members had experience as teachers. A small minority of parent nominees indicated that they had experience as teachers. The majority of the trustee nominees on both types of board had served as teachers. Of these, 23% of community board nominees and 15% of voluntary secondary nominees indicated that they also had experience as educational administrators. This finding suggests a level of potential control of the boards by educators that could ensure that the agenda of the educational professionals is dominant and that could exclude any significant lay input or challenge to the *status quo*. In the United Kingdom, the Taylor Report recommended that governing bodies should have about 25% teacher representation. Jeffries and Streatfield (1989) found that 16.4% of governors on the United Kingdom boards of governors could be termed educational professionals, excluding teacher governors.

There were 34 responses to the open items from among the community board respondents -8 parent nominees, 3 teacher nominees, and 23 trustee nominees. Three respondents identified themselves as being members of the legal profession, three were lecturers at third level educational institutions, three were business or finance professionals, two were politicians, two were employees of Vocational Education Committees, two were nurses, two identified themselves as administrators, one worked with a statutory agency. Under other experiences, the following were mentioned: full-time parenting, membership of and service to a teacher union,

membership of other boards in primary or voluntary secondary schools, service on parent representative associations, and service at administrative level with a political party.

As in the case with the community school boards, there was a limited number of responses from voluntary secondary board nominees to the open sections of item three. Of the 26 responses, 11 were from parent nominees, 13 from trustee nominees and 2 from teacher nominees. In all, 20 different professions were listed. Under other experiences, respondents mentioned their experience as parents (3), as members of other boards at primary and second level (2), and as a member of a teacher union.

The board members on both voluntary secondary and community school boards appear to have a substantial background experience relevant to their role gained through membership of voluntary or statutory groups, and/or through professional experience as teachers or educational professionals. A high percentage of nominees, especially parent nominees on community boards, indicated a level of involvement with the school prior to their nomination as board members. A teaching background is particularly strong among trustee nominees.

In the experience of one principal, common sense and commitment ranked higher than experience:

... most nominees to the board have been exceptionally interested, committed, and endowed with the necessary vocal, educational and "common-sense" qualities. Should people of the opposite qualities (have) been nominated my experience would have been different (Community Principal).

Kogan et al. (1984, p. 92) described boards as "professionally dominated institutions." Part of the reason for this, in their view, was a lack of interest, particularly among parents, in becoming members of governing bodies. Golby (1985) reflected this view. Pascal (1986) found a particular lack of interests among parents from lower socio-economic groups. Pointing to what they termed "the uneven quality and experience of governors as individuals and as a corporate body," Hancock and Hellawell (1998, p. 243) stated that schools in most need had the greatest difficulty in getting a strong supportive body. Bacon (1978) saw the lack of participation by the generality of parents as leaving the way open for the more vocal interests among them to gain control, and leading potentially to a system managed in favour of sectional rather than general interests and the common good. Macbeth (1989, p. 129) argued that the social background of the parent representative was not as important as the skills he/she brought to the task:

- 203 -

It is his capacity to be well-informed, articulate, confident at committee work, skilful at handling people and conscientious in contacting the parents whom he represents that matter more than how 'typical' he is...

For Macbeth, it would seem that the ability of the parent governor to represent parents cancelled out any bias he/she might bring to the task. Those who had the skills necessary for this task were not necessarily typical of the population being represented. On the one hand, it is argued that boards, to be effective, should have among their membership a body of skills, experience, outlook, and sensitivities that can be applied during their deliberations and decision-making. On the other hand, it is argued that the board is a democratic, not primarily an expert institution, and that any tendency to make it into such an institution is undemocratic and contrary to its role as a lay instrument of management. In the discussion around board member expertise, particularly from the perspective of the professionals, there is a view that lay members of boards lack expertise, or incapable of understanding educational issues (e.g. curriculum), and how schools operate. The views of the respondents on this issue were sought in item 20.

Item 20 of the questionnaire for both nominated members and principals sought their views on the importance of competence and expertise in education matters as a consideration in the appointment of board members.

	Strongly		Agree		Disagree		Strongly	
Item 20	agree						disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY	7							
PARENT	-	-	15	56	11	41	1	4
TEACHER	5	16	22	69	5	16	-	-
TRUSTEE	14	26	25	46	15	27	1	2
PRINCIPAL	6	35	6	35	5	29	-	-
COMMUNIT	Y							
PARENT	1	3	8	28	19	66	1	3
TEACHER	6	23	17	65	3	12	-	-
TRUSTEE	25	35	31	44	14	20	1	1
PRINCIPAL	4	22	11	61	3	17	-	-

Table 6.5. In the nomination of board members, the competencies and expertise of the nominees in areas related to education should be an important consideration.

A large majority of the nominees on both types of board, particularly among teacher and trustee nominees, agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Teacher nominees were most likely to support the statement. Parent nominees were least likely to support the statement. The principals were in general agreement with their trustee and teacher nominees. At one level, this outcome suggests that teacher and trustee nominees, and principals hold an elitist concept of participation that makes it dependent on knowledge and skills, leading ultimately to management by a welleducated and skilled group. Parent nominees support an opposite view. This is to oversimplify the concept of participation, and the practicalities of its implementation, particularly in the context of effective participatory governance as discussed in chapter four. To contribute effectively to discussions regarding policy and strategy and to evaluate performance, board members need adequate knowledge.

Knowledge is more than information in the sense that knowledge is the context in which information becomes useful, the background against which information can be digested and appropriately applied. From one perspective, this knowledge is seen as a pre-requisite for nomination. From another perspective, it is seen as unnecessary for a lay board, and to the extent that it is necessary, the board should provide it to its members subsequent to their nomination. Lay boards are expected to be objective and to place the organisation they serve first above the particular interests of any group however expert. Their function does not relate primarily to their expertise. The boards bring together a range of perspectives and experience. The difficulty arises if one type of experience and expertise dominates.

6.1.4 GENDER

Of the one hundred and twenty eight respondents from the community school boards, sixty-five (52%) of the respondents were male and sixty (48%) were female. Of the one hundred and seventeen respondents from the voluntary secondary school boards, fifty-eight (50%) of the responses were from males, and fifty-seven (49%) from females. The table outlines the percentage breakdown across the different categories.

Table 6.6 Response by Gender

		Parents	Tea	chers	Trustees	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Community	30	70	54	46	60	40
Secondary	50	50	48	52	52	48

The balance between males and females on the voluntary secondary school boards was very even. On the community boards there were more males than females among the teacher and trustee nominees, and the reverse in the case of parents. This may be because of a requirement in the Deed of Trust for community schools that one parent nominee on community school boards must be a mother. There is no such requirement in the case of the voluntary secondary boards.

Given the length of service and the background experience of board members, it might be expected that there would be a high level of understanding of the role of the board among them. The following section will present the data on role understanding at the level of the board, board members, and board constituencies.

6.2 THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE ROLE OF THE BOARD

Boards of management exercise authority over the schools they manage. They exist to achieve a goal and to provide a service. Their role at one level is broad and has many aspects. These relate to their responsibilities as educational leaders, as strategists, as protectors and exemplars of the ethos of the school. While they have significant authority, they are sometimes unaware of or reluctant to use their powers (Ziegler, 1975; Kogan et al, 1984), or these powers are effectively taken over or circumscribed by school administrations, or other agencies (Ziegler, Jennings and Peak, 1974; Tucker and Ziegler, 1980). At another level, particularly in relation to staffing and resources, they have a limited role. While technically the employer, their role in the appointment of teachers is circumscribed by regulations and processes determined by the Department of Education and Science. In the voluntary secondary schools, a teacher re-deployment system limits the independence of the board in employing whom it chooses. In the community school sector, a selection board set up by the trustees selects the teachers. The Board of Management appoints them subject to departmental approval. Financial and other resources are also substantially controlled at the level of the same Department.

Clarity of definition and understanding of the role of the board, and the authority and responsibility assigned to it within the framework of its defined role is central to its effectiveness. Kogan et al. (1984, p.143), in a conclusion that echoed Bacon (1978), and was confirmed by Golby (1985), found "a picture of considerable uncertainty." They found that governors "were unsure what they should be doing and consequently doubtful if they were spending their time on the right things and, in particular, whether they were being as effective as they might be." The following sub-sections will set out the findings of the questionnaire survey that relate to the level of understanding of the role the boards were playing. Three items (6,7,11) in the survey sought information from nominated members whether the role of the board was understood by the board itself, by those who nominated it, and by each individual respondent. The focus of the items was to establish whether, in the perception of the members, there was clarity regarding the role of the board at the different levels. Similar items were addressed to the principals, but from a different perspective. They were asked if they believed the role of the board was understood by the three groups – board members, board, and community.

6.2.1. NOMINEE UNDERSTANDING

The following three tables set out the responses to the three items put to the nominees. Item six queries whether the board itself understands its role. Item seven queries whether the role of the board is understood among those who nominate the board members, and item eleven queries whether the individual board members understood their role. The items were stated as follows:

Item 6: As a board, I believe we have a clear understanding of our role and responsibilities.

Item 7: I believe that the group that nominated me has a clear understanding of the role of the board in my school.

Item 11:I am uncertain about my role (duties, responsibilities, powers) as a member of the Board of Management.

	Parent		Teacher		Trustee		Total	
	Ν	%	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
Board Understanding (item 6)								
Strongly agree	12	41	12	44	33	46	57	44
Agree	16	55	15	56	35	49	66	52
Disagree	1	4	0	0	3	4	4	3
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1
Total	29	100	27	100	72	100	128	100
Nominator Understanding	Parent		Teacher		Trustee		Total	
(item 7)	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
Strongly agree	4	14	7	26	47	65	58	45
Agree	11	38	16	59	22	31	49	38
Disagree	14	48	4	15	3	4	21	17
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	29	100	27	100	72	100	128	100
Personal Understanding	Parent		Teacher		Trustee		Total	
	Ν	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Strongly agree	0	0	0	0	4	5	4	3
Agree	6	21	4	15	4	6	14	11
Disagree	18	62	12	44	36	50	66	52
Strongly disagree	5	17	11	41	28	39	44	34
Total	29	100	27	100	72	100	128	100

Table 6.7 Understanding of the role of the board: Community.

The vast majority of all the community school board members indicated that the boards on which they served had a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. While a large majority of all respondents believed that those who nominated and elected or appointed them had a clear understanding of the role of the Board in the school, it is notable that almost half of the parent nominees (48%) disagreed. While a large majority of all respondents also indicated that they themselves had a clear understanding of their own role as board members, almost 21%(6) of the parent nominees indicated uncertainty. Lack of understanding at nominator and personal levels was highest among parents.

The following table sets out the responses of members of voluntary secondary school boards to the same issues.

	Parent		Teacher		Trustee		Total	
	N	%	Ν	%	N	%	Ν	%
Board Understanding								
(Item 6)								
Strongly agree	12	43	11	35	27	47	50	43
Agree	12	43	18	56	29	51	59	50
Disagree	4	14	3	9	1	2	8	7
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	28	100	32	100	57	100	117	100
Nominator Understanding	Parent		Teacher		Trustee		Total	
(Item 7)	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
Strongly agree	3	11	5	16	40	70	48	41
Agree	14	50	17	53	16	28	47	40
Disagree	10	36	9	28	1	2	20	17
Strongly disagree	1	3	1	3	0	0	2	2
	28	100	32	100	57	100	117	100
Personal								
	Parent		Teacher		Trustee		Total	
	N	%	Ν	%	N	%	Ν	%
Strongly agree	0	0	0	0	3	5	3	3
Agree	5	18	3	9	2	4	10	8
Disagree	14	50	17	53	25	44	56	48
Strongly disagree	9	32	12	38	27	47	48	41
	28	100	32	100	57	100	117	100

Table 6.8Understanding the role of the board: Voluntary Secondary

As was the case on community boards, the vast majority of the respondents from the voluntary secondary boards indicated that their boards had a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. Overall, a large majority of the respondents believed that the group that nominated them had a clear understanding of the role of the board in their schools. Almost all the trustee nominees believed this to be the case. A substantial minority percentage of parent and of teacher nominees did not agree. While the percentage of parent nominees that disagreed was not as high as in the case of the community boards, the percentage of teacher nominees who disagreed was higher. A large majority of all respondents indicated that they themselves had a clear understanding of their own role as board members. Just under 18%(5) of the parent nominees indicated uncertainty. Was the perception of the nominee respondents corroborated by their principals? The following sub-section sets out the perspective of the principals.

6.2.2. PRINCIPAL UNDERSTANDING

The principals were asked to respond from their viewpoints on how they perceived their boards on the same issues – board, nominator and member understanding of the role of the board - in items four, five and ten of their questionnaire.

Item 10I believe that the board as a whole is uncertain about its role.Item 5I believe that there is a good understanding among nominating groups of the role

of the board of management.

Item 4 I believe that, in general, the board members have a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities.

Their responses are set out in the following table:

Table 6.9Understanding the role of the board: The view of the Principals.

	Second.		Comm.		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Board Understanding						
Strongly agree	0	0	0	0	0	
Agree	4	23	1	5	5	14
Disagree	10	59	13	69	23	64
Strongly disagree	3	18	5	26	8	22
Total	17	100	19	100	36	100
Nominator Understanding						
Strongly agree	0	0	2	10	2	6
Agree	11	65	14	74	25	69
Disagree	5	29	3	16	8	22
Strongly disagree	1	6	0	0	1	3
	17	100	19	100	36	100
Member Understanding						
Strongly agree	2	12	6	32	8	23
Agree	11	69	13	68	24	68
Disagree	3	19	0	0	3	9
Strongly disagree	0	0	0	0	0	0
	16	100	19	100	35	100

Item 10 asked principals to indicate their support for the view that their boards were uncertain about their role. While a large majority of the voluntary secondary principals disagreed with the -210 -

proposition, their view on the boards' understanding of their role was less positive than that of the nominated board members themselves. The community principals, by showing a strong belief that their boards were not uncertain of their role, indicated a more positive view of their boards' understanding than did the voluntary principals. Their view corresponded closely with that indicated by their nominated board members.

On the issue of nominator understanding of the role of the board, three quarters of the principals agreed that there was a good understanding among the nominating groups. Voluntary secondary principals were less likely to agree that this was the case, than the community principals. They were also less positive than their nominated board members on the issue, while community principals showed a close agreement with their nominated members.

While there was a general view indicated by the principals from both sectors that the nominated board members had an understanding of their role as members, community school principals were more likely to be of this view, than the voluntary secondary principals. Voluntary secondary principals were less positive than their nominated members on the issue.

6.2.3. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In the literature reviewed in chapters two and three, the composition and the background of school board members, and particularly their competence, forms part of many of the studies of boards (Gordan, 1974; Bacon, 1978; Keohane, 1979; Golby and Brigley; 1988, Golby, 1993; Angus, 1989). The discussion on composition related principally to the size of the board, equality of access to board membership, and the levels of representation and balance on boards - the social background of members, gender, age, social class, and the balance on the boards between the different stakeholder groups. The discussion on competence related principally to skills, educational and management experience, attitudes, resources, interests, and the ability of members to become involved with, and to know the school.

On both voluntary secondary and community boards used in this study, there was a balance between male and female nominees, except in the case of the parent nominees on the community boards, where the balance was decidedly in favour of females. The largest turnover of board members on both boards was among parent and teacher nominees. Trustee nominees were the longest serving members of both boards, with those on community boards having the longest service overall. The board members on both voluntary secondary and community school boards indicated that they had a substantial background experience that might be relevant to their role, gained through membership of voluntary or statutory groups, or through professional experience as teachers, or as educational professionals. A substantial number of nominees brought an experience of collaborative work from other areas to their boards. Community board respondents were more likely than their voluntary secondary counterparts to have had experience as members of a statutory or of a voluntary body. This was related to the presence of trustee nominees from the vocational education committees. Overall, including teacher nominees, over two-thirds of the nominee members on the community boards, and over half of the nominee members on voluntary secondary boards, had a background in, or related to teaching. A teaching background was particularly strong among the trustee nominees on both boards. A high percentage of nominees, especially parent nominees on community boards, indicated a level of direct involvement with the school prior to their nomination as board members. The nature of this involvement was not queried. Given the number of board members that indicated an involvement with the school prior to their nomination, it seems reasonable to expect that they brought with them a degree of experience and knowledge of the school that assisted them and their boards. The boards tended to be relatively homogeneous groups. They had a substantial reservoir of experience of collaborative work through their involvement with voluntary or statutory bodies. Given the number of their members with a professional background related to education, they had knowledge and experience of educational matters, and given the level of involvement with the school prior to their nomination, many members had knowledge and experience of the school. Kogan et al. (1984, p.92) described boards as "professionally dominated institutions." The high percentage of members with a professional background in education serving on the boards suggests a level of potential control of the boards by professional educators that might ensure that the agenda of the educational professionals is dominant. On the assumption that the educational professionals would have a greater appreciation and possibly sympathy with the problems of fellow professionals, this dominance could exclude any significant lay input, or challenge to the status quo. Against this, there is a substantial reservoir of experience and a capacity among the other members of the boards to ensure that their voices are heard. It is not suggested that, of itself, this background experience is immediately transferable without substantial orientation and training to the board setting. Attaining a balance of skills, experience, and perspectives on a particular board in a system where some members are elected and some are nominated is difficult.

This situation serves to underline the need for induction, training and ongoing support. Irrespective of their backgrounds, all members of the board enjoy an equal status as educational leaders, strategists, protectors and exemplars of the ethos of the school.

The literature discussed in chapters two and three suggested that there was de facto a level of ambiguity among many board members about the role of the board and the responsibilities of board members. According to the literature, many boards and their members did not seem to have a realistic, operable understanding of their role, or appeared to be inadequately prepared for their role, or were formally or informally socialised into existing board structures and cultures by their peers when appointed to the boards. In the current study, the respondents did not indicate that this was their perception. In terms of role understanding, a generally similar picture emerged from both types of board. Board members perceived themselves to be well informed about their role and activities. There was almost unanimity among the nominee respondents that their boards, as boards, had a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Overall, a large majority of the nominee respondents on both types of boards indicated that their nominators had a clear understanding of the role of the board in the school, and that they themselves had an understanding of their own role as board members. On both types of board, lack of understanding at nominator and personal levels was highest among parents. Trustee nominees were the most positive group on each of the issues. In general, voluntary secondary principals were less positive regarding the level of understanding of the board at the levels of the board, the community, and the individual, than their nominated members. They were also less positive on each of the three issues – personal, board and community understandings - than the community principals were about their boards. Nominator/community understanding of the role of the board in the school, particularly among parents, and to a lesser degree among teachers, was indicated as an area for concern.

In the following sections of this chapter the data relating to a particular aspects of the role of the board and how, from the perspective of the nominee board members and the principals, it is being exercised are set out, analysed and discussed. These sections will deal with the relationship between policy and administration on the board, the orientation of board members, their responsiveness and accountability in terms of the relationship of the boards with their schools and communities, and the board's own accountability. The sections relate to the board as a forum that

includes the primary stakeholders in its processes through promoting inclusiveness and collaboration in achieving their goals in the context of the overall interests of the school.

6.3 POLICY OR ADMINISTRATION

There is a clear view in the literature reviewed that the effective board consciously and deliberately differentiates its role from that of management. There appears to be a general agreement in one strand of the literature that policy is the primary responsibility of the board (Drucker, 1969; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992; Chait et al. 1993). Loosely defined, policies are general rules setting out what the organisation is about, how and who will implement these rules (Drucker, 1969; Brodisky, 1977; Ross, 1987; Danzberger et al., 1992; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). They relate to the strategic dimension of a board's operations, its ability to shape institutional direction, and focus primarily on organisational priorities. Policy might be described as the opposite of administration, loosely understood in terms of day-to-day management. In this understanding, the primary role of board members is seen as developing, deciding and monitoring the implementation of policy, and the school administration is seen as being responsible for implementing the board's policies according to procedures agreed by the board. At the theoretical level, the distinction appears to present an attractive structural framework for understanding boards. According to one view, full responsibility for all aspects of policy rests with the board, and board members are expected to take an active role at all stages of its development. An alternative view posits that the task of developing policies and presenting them to the board is a management one, while the role of the board is one of considering proposed policies, deciding on them, monitoring and reviewing their implementation. A third view contends that the two processes – political and administrative - are intermixed, and that taking one or other perspective does not give an adequate view of the realities on boards (Self, 1977, Golby, 1992; Nicholls, 1990, 1995). An argument is made for this view in the review of the literature in chapter four in the context of the discussion of the relationship of policy to administration. The argument is for a sharing of functions between the board and the school administration. While board members recognise their role as policy makers, individual boards vary considerably in the degree to which they are involved in initiating, preparing and evaluating policies. The level of discretion a board has in policy depends on its place within the macro-system. In each of the views, the board continues to be responsible. In the case of the voluntary secondary and community boards, there is no distinction made in either the Articles of Management or the Deed of Trust between policy

and administration as the particular areas of responsibility of any group. Within the terms of these documents, school boards of management and their administrations do have substantial responsibilities. All of these responsibilities have policy and organisational dimensions.

By clearly defining its own role, a board of management is more likely to ensure that its activities are more explicit and deliberate than ad hoc or reactive, less involved in administrative matters, and to have more time to focus on its priorities. The focus of the propositions addressed to board members in this section was to get an indication whether their boards, in their view, were concerned primarily with the strategic or organisational dimensions of their role. Did their ongoing concerns, the issues that got most attention at meetings, show them to be operating pro-actively out of a strategic/policy agenda, or out of an administrative/organisational agenda? A clear and shared vision can provide a basis on which effective relationships in both the external and internal environments of the board can be developed (Coulson-Thomas, 1993, p.150). Has the board an agreed set of values that impact on what it does (Items 8,16,70)? The school has been shaped by its history, it exists in the present, and the effective board positions it for the future. The effective board member needs to connect with the wider reality that is the school in its community within the wider society. Against the background of this discussion and the literature discussed in chapter two, and in chapter four, section four, the following issues were addressed to nominees and principals in the surveys. At its meetings, does it deal with issues relating to future plans for the school (Item 19.3), school policy development (Item 19.7), issues relating to educational change (Item 19.10), staff development issues (Item 19.11)? How strong is its educational agenda? Is it well informed about wider educational issues (Item 57)? Does it deal with education related agenda items such as the curriculum (Item 19.1), the academic progress of pupils (Item 19.8), staff performance issues (Item 19.6), or is it more comfortable dealing with routine/administrative matters (Item 12)? Finance (Item 19.5), maintenance (Item 19.2) and discipline issues (Item 19.4) were put as administrative matters.

The proposition that their boards tended to approve policies presented to them by the school administration, more than they develop their own policies was put to nominees and principals in item 9 (Item 8 in the case of principals).

Item 9	Strong	ly agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%	Ň	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	4	14	13	46	11	39	-	-
TEACHER	6	19	13	41	12	38	1	3
TRUSTEE	5	9	22	39	28	49	2	4
PRINCIPAL	9	53	6	35	2	12	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	1	3	13	45	13	45	2	7
TEACHER	5	19	15	56	7	26	-	-
TRUSTEE	14	20	35	49	20	28	2	3
PRINCIPAL	8	42	11	58	-	-	-	-

Table 6.10 As a board, we tend to approve policies presented to us by the school administration more than we develop board policies.

Overall, a majority of all the nominees agreed that boards tended to approve policies presented to them by the school administration more than they developed their own policies. It is notable that the principals were almost unanimous in their agreement. With the exceptions of trustee nominees on voluntary secondary boards and parents on community boards, the majority among all other categories of respondent also supported the proposition. Though the majority view supported the proposition, a substantial minority of nominated members disagreed, which suggests that they perceived themselves as initiating their own policies.

Items 9 and 47 are related. Item 47 (item 46 in the case of the principals) queried the level of acceptance or questioning of recommendations made by the principals to their boards – the board usually accepts recommendations from the principal with little questioning by the members.

Item 47	Strongl	y agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	3	11	4	14	20	71	1	4
TEACHER	4	13	13	41	15	47	-	-
TRUSTEE	3	5	18	32	33	58	3	5
PRINCIP.	2	12	6	35	8	47	1	6
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	3	10	8	28	18	62	-	-
TEACHER	5	19	7	26	14	52	1	4
TRUSTEE	8	11	18	25	40	56	6	8
PRINCIP.	1	5	10	53	1	5	7	39

Table 6.11The board usually accepts recommendations from principal with littlequestioning by the members.

While boards approve policies presented by principals, from the perspective of the majority of all nominee categories, with the exception of voluntary secondary teacher nominees, recommendations from the principal to the board are questioned. They are not given automatic approval. At the same time, there is a strong contrary view among nominees, which got support among the principals. Of the principals, a small majority agreed that the board accepted recommendations from them with little questioning - 47%(8) voluntary secondary, and 58%(11) community principals. The overall finding suggests that principals have the potential to exert a considerable influence on their boards.

Item 12 asked board nominees and principals to respond to the statement that their boards were more comfortable dealing with routine matters that arose in the school, than in discussing policy issues.

	Strongly a	Igree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly	
Item 12							disagree	
	Ν	%	N	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	3	11	8	29	15	54	2	7
TEACHER	4	13	13	41	14	44	1	3
TRUSTEE	2	4	25	44	19	33	11	19
PRINCIPAL	2	1	7	41	7	41	1	6
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	2	7	8	28	17	59	2	7
TEACHER	3	11	14	52	10	37	-	-
TRUSTEE	5	7	19	26	41	57	7	10
PRINCIPAL			4	22	13	72	1	6

Table 6.12The board is more comfortable dealing with routine matters that arise in the
school, than in discussing policy matters.

With the exception of the teacher nominees on both types of board and the voluntary secondary principals, the majority of the respondents from all the other categories of nominee disagreed with the statement. In disagreeing with the statement, the majority of parent and trustee nominees on the community and voluntary secondary school boards and the community principals suggested that boards were comfortable discussing policy issues. While 43% of all the nominees agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, 57% disagreed or strongly disagreed, an outcome that indicated a substantial level of disagreement around the issue.

Items 12 and 15 are related. Item 15 (Item 14 in the case of principals) put the proposition that the board tended to focus more on current concerns than on the future of the school.

	Strongly a	agree	Agree		Disagree		Strongly	
Item 15							disagree	
	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%	Ν	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	1	4	8	29	11	39	8	28
TEACHER	1	3	10	31	12	38	9	28
TRUSTEE	5	9	12	21	30	53	10	17
PRINCIPAL	2	1	7	41	6	35	2	12
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	1	3	4	14	20	69	4	14
TEACHER	2	7	9	33	13	48	3	11
TRUSTEE	5	4	34	27	69	54	20	16
PRINCIPAL	-	-	11	58	8	42	-	-

Table 6.13Our board tends to focus more on current concerns than on the future of theschool.

The majority of the nominees – parent, teacher, trustee – on both boards disagreed with the proposition, while the majority of the principals on each type of board agreed. In the perception of the majority of the nominees in all the nominee categories, boards tended to focus more on the future of the school, than on current concerns. The majority of both the voluntary secondary and community principals had a different perception. In their perception, the opposite was the case. The response of the principals suggests that, in their view, there was a tendency for the boards to involve themselves in administrative matters to the neglect of their policy role.

In the Deed of Trust for Community Schools and the Articles of Management of the Secondary Schools the mandate under which the boards operate is set out. In these documents, the role of the board is described. An emphasis is placed on it as the protector and promoter of the ethos of its school. Board members were asked if they consulted the documents at least occasionally (Item 70)? Did they perceive that their boards in their operations were relating themselves to the values of the school they were managing? Was what the school stood for taken into account in treating important issues (Item 16)? Had the board agreed a set of values according to which it sought to manage the school (Item 8)? Were new board members briefed on their role and responsibilities (Item 52)? These issues have a bearing on the direction the board sets for the school, on generating commitment to a vision, and on the impact of that vision on policy decisions.

A little more than half of the respondents overall indicated that they consulted the Deed of Trust/Articles of Management at least occasionally.

	Regularly		Often		Seldom		Never	
Item 70	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	1	4	11	42	11	42	3	12
TEACHER	5	16	10	31	13	41	4	13
TRUSTEE	9	16	25	45	19	34	3	5
PRINCIPAL	4	24	9	53	3	18	1	6
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	1	4	14	50	10	36	3	11
TEACHER	3	11	11	41	10	37	3	11
TRUSTEE	12	17	28	39	20	28	11	16
PRINCIPAL	7	37	9	47	3	16	-	-

Table 6.14I consult the Deed of Trust (community schools) or Articles of Management(secondary schools) at least occasionally.

Of the voluntary secondary respondents, the majority of trustee nominees and a substantial minority of parent and teacher nominees indicated that they consulted the Articles of Management regularly or often. On community boards, parent, teacher and trustee nominees indicated generally similar levels of consultation of the Deed of Trust. It may be that these documents are only consulted in times of difficulty, or in resolving difficult issues. A large majority of the principals on both types of board indicated that they consulted their respective management documents at least often. This is understandable if the principal is the primary recipient of problematic issues, and advisor to the board. Wohlstetter et al. (1997) found that boards that got stuck on power and housekeeping issues, and on their manuals - more than curriculum and instruction issues - were struggling.

The management documents are important briefing documents for board members. The response to item 52 set out in chapter seven, section six indicates that the majority of all groupings, with the exception of teacher nominees on community boards, agreed that the trustees ensured that each new board was briefed on its role and responsibilities. A substantial minority indicated that briefings were not given. If members are not briefed and seed documents are not consulted, from where do board members take their direction?

The Deed of Trust and the Articles of Management are more than just documents setting out legal frameworks. They express and imply a value context for the management of the school. Value choices influence what people do and how they will do it. Ideally they will represent the best balance between the different and potentially competing values of the different stakeholders. Choosing between values regularly presents dilemmas. Elaborating its value context helps the board clarify its purpose, that of its members, and of its school. Had the board an agreed set of values according to which it sought to manage the school?

Table 6.15 As a board, we have agreed a set of values according to which we seek to manage the school.

Item 8	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
item o	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	11	39	14	50	3	11	-	-
TEACHER	11	34	14	44	7	22	-	-
TRUSTEE	27	47	25	44	4	7	1	2
PRINCIPAL	4	25	9	56	3	19	-	-
COMMUNITY	(
PARENT	11	38	15	52	3	10	-	-
TEACHER	5	19	17	63	4	15	1	4
TRUSTEE	35	49	32	44	4	6	1	1
PRINCIPAL	4	21	10	53	5	26	-	-

There was a high level of agreement with the proposition from all groupings. Of the groupings, teacher nominees on both types of board were less likely to agree than either parent or trustee nominees. The levels of agreement among principals were closer to teacher nominees than to the other nominees. Community principals were less likely to agree than voluntary secondary principals were.

The response to item 8 indicated a high level of agreement that boards had developed sets of values. Value choices go beyond choices between right and wrong and frequently involve competing rights. Decisions that may improve learning and performance may seriously disrupt harmony. For boards, translating the value statement into practice, especially when faced with complex issues or problems, can be difficult. Item 16 queried if what the school stood for was ever expressly related to board business?

Item 16	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	1	4	15	56	10	37	1	4
TEACHER	2	6	15	47	15	47	-	-
TRUSTEE	8	14	31	54	17	30	1	2
PRINCIPAL	5	29	6	35	5	29	1	6
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	3	10	13	45	11	38	2	7
TEACHER	1	4	7	26	17	63	2	7
TRUSTEE	4	6	40	56	21	29	7	10
PRINCIPAL	-	-	11	58	8	42	1.1.1	-

Table 6.16 In discussing key issues, it is not unusual for a member to ask about what the school stands for and how that is related to the matter under discussion.

The majority of all groupings, with the exception of teacher nominees on community boards, agreed that what the school stood for was related by members to matters under discussion. There was a substantial minority in all groupings across both types of board that did not agree that this happened. There was also a substantial correspondence in the levels of agreement between the two types of board, though the levels indicated by all categories of community nominee and community principals were lower than was the case on the voluntary secondary boards.

In summary, a majority of all the parent nominees indicated that their boards tended to approve policy proposed by the school administration. A minority of the parent nominees indicated that recommendations by principals were accepted with little questioning by the board, and that boards were more comfortable dealing with routine matters, while a smaller minority accepted that boards tended to focus more on current concerns than on the future of the school. The majority of teachers indicated that their boards tended to approve policies, accepted recommendations from principals with little questioning, were more comfortable dealing with routine matters, and a minority accepted that current concerns got precedence over the future of the school. While the majority of trustees indicated that boards tended to approve policies, a minority accepted that recommendations were accepted with little questioning, boards were more comfortable dealing with routine matters, or that current concerns got precedence over the future of the school. The majority of principals indicated that the board approved policies and accepted recommendations from principals without questioning, while a minority overall

indicated that they were more comfortable dealing with routine issues or with the future of the school. The principals are not excluded from the policy process and appear to enjoy significant influence in proposing and implementing policies. The general response to these items indicated that while the majority thrust of board activities would appear to be administrative, there is also a substantial involvement with policy issues. The majority view suggests that the role of the board as an initiator of policy is often overlooked. The majority administrative thrust indicated suggests that the boards are not be clear about, or sufficiently in tune with their primary role, which, in terms of policy, is to focus on the long-term good of their schools, to monitor their progress, and to see that they fulfil their mission. A community principal suggested that discussion of policy in the context of boards of management was irrelevant, in that the focus of the boards was on the implementation of policies already determined by outside sources. In his view, what was left to the discretion of the board was relatively minor. While accepting that the policy role of the board is commensurate with its place in the macro-system, to accept the contention that it has little or no such role is to accept that it is a redundant institution.

The findings echo the general findings in the literature that board members do not concern themselves with the long-term view, and concentrate primarily on current issues and events (Wells and McKibben, 1990; Hellawell, 1990; Arnott et al., 1991; New et al., 1993; Madden, 1993). Levacic (1995, p. 337) suggests that a lack of clarity between governance - understood in terms of policy, and management - understood as policy implementation, is a factor of the passive role being played governors in English schools. In this role, governors were acting more as supporters and advisers, than as managers holding the principal and the school accountable (Kogan et al. 1984; Thody 1990; Curtis, 1994). In practice, these boards were not exercising their *de jure* powers. These studies also underline the role of the principal both in the initiation and implementation of policy. According to Levacic (1998, p. 337), the normal "mode of working is for the head to put proposals to the governing body, and after some questioning, to have them approved." She did note that there were boards that were entirely passive and that merely rubber stamped the proposals made by principals, and boards that were deeply involved to a level where their involvement could be seen as interference in day-to-day management.

Indications of the effectiveness of a board, its priorities and general focus in terms of the policy/strategy, educational and administrative roles played by it may be obtained from an examination of the items on which it spends its time. The general purpose of item 19 was to

determine the main thrust of the board's activities. It has twelve sub-items that can be categorised under three heads or thrusts – policy, education and administration – related to the matters dealt with at meetings of the boards of management. These sub-items queried the regularity with which certain issues were raised at board meetings.

6.3.1 STRATEGIC POLICY THRUST

Items 19.3, 19.7 and 19.10 relate to policy and queried the regularity with which future plans for the school, school policy development, and issues related to educational change were raised at meetings of the board – regularly, often, seldom, or never. Item 19.3 queried the regularity with which future plans for the schools were raised.

	Regular		Often		Seldom		Never	
Item 19.3	Ν	%	N	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	10	36	15	54	3	11	-	-
TEACHER	16	50	13	41	3	9	-	-
TRUSTEE	28	50	21	38	7	13	-	-
PRINCIPAL	6	35	9	53	2	12	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	10	36	17	61	1	4	-	-
TEACHER	7	27	14	54	5	19	-	-
TRUSTEE	25	35	35	49	9	13	2	3
PRINCIPAL	5	26	11	58	3	16	-	-

Table 6.17 Future plans raised.

Over all, a large majority of the nominees from both types of board indicated that future plans were raised at least often. Parent, teacher, and trustee nominees on the two types of board indicated a generally similar position. A similar majority of the principals on each type of board indicated that such plans were raised at least often.

Boards are responsible for formulating - or at least considering and approving - policies and decisions relating to broad development strategies for the school. Ongoing systematic effort is needed for continued improvement. Item 19.7 queried how often school policy development issues were raised.

	Regular		Often		Seldom		Never	
Item 19.7	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	9	32	6	21	13	46	-	-
TEACHER	7	22	13	41	10	31	2	6
TRUSTEE	13	24	27	49	13	24	2	4
PRINCIPAL	4	25	8	50	3	19	1	6
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	3	11	15	56	8	30	1	4
TEACHER	4	16	11	44	7	28	3	12
TRUSTEE	16	22	41	57	13	18	2	3
PRINCIPAL	2	11	12	63	5	26	-	-

Table 6.18School policy development raised.

When taken together, over two-thirds of the responses from the voluntary secondary and community school board nominees indicated that school policy development issues were raised at least often. While school policy development issues were raised at least often in the view of the majority of nominees, there was a substantial number of nominees, particularly among parent and teacher nominees, in whose view these issues were seldom or never raised. A motivated and professional school staff is the primary resource available to the board and is central to school development.

Torrington and Weighman (1989), based on the study by the Economic and Social Research Council in the United Kingdom, state that staff in schools are a resource that is generally taken for granted (p.519). Staff development is recognised as being the responsibility of both employers and employees. It covers the development of skills, knowledge and competencies. There is evidence in the comments from the teacher nominees and in the literature of a hunger for professional development. It is important in the context of the future of the school and crucial if the school is to respond effectively to the challenges of change (Little, 1993; Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin, 1995). Item 19.12 queried how regularly staff development issues were raised.

	Regular		Often		Seldom		Never	
Item 19.12	N	%	Ν	%	N	%	Ν	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	8	30	10	37	5	19	4	15
TEACHER	4	14	9	31	12	41	4	14
TRUSTEE	3	6	25	48	21	40	3	6
PRINCIPAL	-	-	7	41	10	59	-	-
COMMUNITY	7							
PARENT	6	21	9	32	11	39	2	7
TEACHER	-	-	9	35	14	54	3	12
TRUSTEE	14	20	26	37	29	41	1	1
PRINCIPAL	1	5	8	42	10	53	-	-

Table 6.19Staff development issues raised.

When taken together, a small majority of the total number of nominees from voluntary secondary and community boards indicated that staff development issues were raised at least often. A majority of the professionals on each type of board indicated that staff development issues were seldom or never raised, while a majority of the laity on each board indicated that they were raised. It appears that the understanding of what constitutes staff development varies between lay and professional members of the boards, and that the expectancies of the professionals are not being satisfied. The response of the lay members on the board suggests that, in their view, they are addressing staff development issues. Based on this outcome, there is a responsibility on the professionals to inform the board of their understanding of staff development. If it is a priority for them, they have an opportunity to ensure that it is raised at board meetings. In the current climate of educational change, the professional development of staff ought to have a high priority. It is important that boards develop their own policies for such development.

Educational change is an important contextual factor that impacts on the future plans for the school, staff development, and school policy development generally. Item 19.10 queried how regularly issues of educational change were raised.

	Regular		Often		Seldom		Never	
Item 19.10	N	%	N	%	N	%	Ν	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	9	32	11	39	4	14	4	14
TEACHER	6	19	14	45	11	36	-	-
TRUSTEE	9	17	32	60	11	21	1	2
PRINCIPAL	2	12	10	59	4	23	1	6
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	6	22	17	63	2	7	2	7
TEACHER	2	8	14	54	10	39	-	-
TRUSTEE	14	20	34	49	21	30	1	1
PRINCIPAL	6	32	10	53	3	16	-	-

Table 6.20Educational change raised.

A substantial majority of all categories of respondent on each type of board indicated that issues of educational change were raised at least often. Teacher nominees were less likely to indicate this position than any other category of nominee. As the professional educators, teacher nominees on the boards are well placed to ensure that issues of educational change are raised. The O.E.C.D report (1991, p. 7-8) acknowledged that changes had taken place in Irish education since 1965. It also commented (p.36) that the "Department of Education functions like a classic, highly centralised bureaucracy and that the "face that the Irish school presents to the world is ... quite recognisably that of previous generations." (p.55). Whether the issues of educational change dealt with the board are issues of operational change or substantive issues relating to policy and development that contribute to overall school effectiveness needs further investigation. The tradition identified by the O.E.C.D. report suggests that operational issues are the dominant preoccupation of the boards.

The data presented in the previous section of this chapter relating to the policy and administrative thrust of the boards suggests that though there is a substantial involvement with policy issues on the boards, the majority thrust of board activities appears to be administrative. In their responses to item 15 set out in the previous section, a majority of all categories of board member, except the voluntary secondary principals, disagreed with the proposition that boards tended to focus on current concerns more than on the future of the school. This majority was substantially lower across all categories than that indicated in the responses to items 19.3, 19.7 and 19.10. These responses indicated a very high level of agreement among all categories of board member that issues relating to future plans for the school, school policy development, and educational change are raised at least often. Taken with the response to item 15, they suggest

that while policy issues are raised at least often in the view of the vast majority of the respondents, the frequency with which they were raised does not always reflect the priority accorded to them in the deliberations of the board, or that the focus of these deliberations is on administrative more than substantive aspects of policy.

6.3.2 EDUCATIONAL THRUST

Both staff development and educational change issues relate also to the educational agenda of the board of management. Items 19.1, 19.6, 19.8, 19.9, 19.10 and 19.12 refer to a range of other issues that might form part of that agenda. The list of items identified is not inclusive of all issues of importance that might arise under this general heading.

Item 19.1 related to the frequency with which curriculum issues were raised at board meetings. Traditionally, the academic staff, subject to general management direction, decided the curriculum and the syllabi in a school. Given that schools follow the standard syllabi set down in the Rules and Programmes for Secondary Schools, and that subjects require generally similar amounts of time, it may be asked what issues should concern the board? Issues such as the range of subjects, subject choices offered in the school, courses provided, curriculum arrangements to meet the needs of different categories of pupils, resources to support new or existing curriculum provision, curriculum change are important in the context of school curriculum policy. There is also a role for the board in determining the philosophy underlying the curriculum and adapting the curriculum to the ethos of the school. Discussion on curriculum issues provides an opportunity for the board to address the purpose of their school.

T 11 (01	A 1		
Table 6.21	Curriculum	1001100	raised
14010 0.21	Currentum	100000	raisea.

	Regular		Often		Seldom		Never	
Item 19.1	N	%	N	%	N	%	Ν	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	6	21	7	25	11	39	4	14
TEACHER	5	18	7	25	15	54	1	4
TRUSTEE	18	33	19	35	15	28	2	4
PRINCIPAL	4	24	4	24	9	53	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	11	39	8	29	8	29	1	4
TEACHER	4	15	13	50	9	35	-	-
TRUSTEE	27	39	25	36	17	25	-	-
PRINCPAL	1	6	9	50	8	44	-	-

Taking the nominee respondents together, a majority indicated that curriculum issues were raised at least often. Almost a third indicated that such issues were raised regularly. There was a marked difference between the responses from the voluntary secondary and community nominees. Over half the respondents from among parent and teacher nominees and principals from voluntary secondary boards indicated that curriculum issues were seldom or never raised at boards. There was majority agreement across all categories of respondent that curriculum issues were raised at community board meeting. Of the respondents, the trustee nominees on both types of board were most positive that such issues were raised at least often. Parent and teacher nominees and principals, because of their immediate involvement with the issues, may be more conscious of the adequacy and frequency of curriculum discussions at board meetings than the trustee nominees. In the light of the comment in the O.E.C.D. report (1991, p. 63) that the retraining of teachers should "emphasise their role as articulators, managers and organisers of learning and not purveyors of facts and coaches for examination," the nature of the issues raised, whether they were operational or substantive, and the depth of discussion around them needs further investigation.

In management terms, students are the clients of the board, the beneficiaries of its services and ought to be the focus of its planning. Munn (1998, p. 379), writing in the context of Scottish governing bodies, stated that the creation of school boards, on which parents were represented was a mechanism through which schools "would be encouraged to pay attention to the key matter of student achievement." In her view, the government assumed that the key attraction for parents getting involved would be the academic achievements of pupils (p.380). Item 19.8 queried the regularity with which the academic progress of students was raised at boards. Table 6.22 Academic progress raised.

	Regular		Often		Seldom		Never	
Item 19.8	N	%	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	3	11	7	26	14	52	3	11
TEACHER	3	10	8	26	15	48	5	16
TRUSTEE	4	7	24	44	24	44	3	6
PRINCIPAL	-	-	7	41	9	53	1	6
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	4	14	6	21	14	50	4	14
TEACHER	3	13	5	21	12	50	4	17
TRUSTEE	10	15	36	53	20	29	2	3
PRINCIPAL	2	11	3	17	13	72	-	-

It might be expected that as student academic performance is of critical interest to parents, and intrinsically rewarding for teachers, that it might be an area that would merit a lot of board attention. Almost two-thirds of the principals and over half of the nominees indicated that student academic progress was seldom or never raised. Parent and teacher nominees and principals on both types of board were in substantial agreement on the issue. A majority of the trustee nominees – larger in the case of community boards than in the case of voluntary secondary boards - indicated that the issue was raised at least often. The outcome corresponds with the finding of Deem et al. (1990) that comparatively little time was spent by the boards discussing the education of the pupils. A school policy on student assessment is a vehicle for its educational philosophy and an important operational policy as it sets out an important element of its approach to its students. It can also promote good teaching practices as agreed standards, aims and objectives are compared across curricular areas.

Community education is a specific and expressed element in the mandate of the community school, hence it might be expected that it would be a regular item on the agenda of the board of management. It has not been emphasised to the same extent in the voluntary secondary school mandate.

	Regular		Often		Seldom		Never	
Item 19.9	N	%	N	%	N	%	Ν	%
SECONDAR	Y							
PARENT	4	15	4	15	12	46	6	23
TEACHER	1	3	3	10	15	48	12	39
TRUSTEE	2	4	12	22	33	61	7	13
PRINCIPAL	-	-	2	12	10	59	5	29
COMMUNIT	Υ							
PARENT	3	11	12	44	10	37	2	7
TEACHER	1	4	6	24	14	56	4	16
TRUSTEE	11	16	27	39	28	41	3	4
PRINCIPAL	-	-	7	37	12	63	-	-

Table 6.23Community education raised.

As might be expected, given the mandate of the community schools, the response to item 19.9 indicated that community education issues appeared more regularly on the agenda of community boards than on the agenda of voluntary secondary boards. Less than a quarter of voluntary secondary respondents and just over half of the respondents from the community boards indicated that such issues were raised at least often. In the light of the profile of the

community schools in community education, a higher level of board involvement might have been expected. The low level of involvement at board level may be because of the in-school management structure for community education programmes and the delegation of responsibilities for these to a community education director and/or team. However, this does not explain the lack of discussion if boards are concerned with the values and mission of the school.

All organisations, including the boards themselves, have an implicit or explicit appreciation of the performance of their members. Within school communities, approaches are made to management by colleagues, by parents or by pupils expressing praise or complaining about the perceived performance of staff at all levels. Yet, there was a high level of agreement that staff performance issues (Item 19.6) were not raised on a regular basis. Information of such issues could provide an opportunity for boards to discuss work issues systematically, to re-enforce good practice, and to collaboratively address any problems that may exist.

Table 6.24	Staff performance	issues	raised.	

	Regular		Often		Seldom		Never	
Item 19.6	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
SECONDAR	Y							
PARENT	3	12	3	12	10	39	10	39
TEACHER	-	-	2	7	13	45	14	48
TRUSTEE	1	2	7	13	26	49	19	36
PRINCIPAL		-	2	12	11	65	4	24
COMMUNI	ΓY							
PARENT	3	11	7	26	10	37	7	26
TEACHER	-	-	4	15	19	73	3	12
TRUSTEE	5	7	14	20	41	59	10	14
PRINCIPAL		-	2	11	9	47	8	42

A large majority of all the nominees and of all the principals indicated that staff performance issues were seldom or never raised at their boards. Community board nominees across all the categories of nominee were more likely to indicate that they were raised than voluntary secondary nominees or principals. In comments, some teacher nominees saw the mention of staff performance as negative and called for greater emphasis on staff development, and for boards to be more supportive. The issue of how to deal with incompetent teacher was raised in comments from all categories of respondent. The thrust of the comments confirm the main finding that staff issues are seldom raised and suggest that when they are raised the discussion is

- 231 -

generally guarded. The negative interpretation put on the item by some teacher nominees indicates defensiveness on their part. In a context where the demands being placed on staff continues to grow and where there are legislative changes that place new obligations on boards as employers and staff members as employees, issues of stress and staff morale arise that ought to be considered by boards in the context of their commitment to both their staff and the school. Principals in particular will be aware of these issues. They impact on the educational provision in the school. The implementation of educational change depends on the teachers and how they approach their task (Fullan, 1991). Acting as an employer, the board has a responsibility to manage the performance of its staff and to ensure that they are performing to the standards expected of them in meeting the needs of their students.

In response to item 19.10 above, a large majority of nominees and of principals indicated that issues relating to educational change were raised at least often. How well informed on educational issues board members saw themselves was queried in item 57 put to nominees (Item 55 in the questionnaire for principals).

Item 57	Strongly		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	agree	21					-	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY SECO	ONDARY							
PARENT	3	11	19	70	5	19	-	-
TEACHER	2	6	16	50	14	44	-	-
TRUSTEE	8	14	38	67	11	19	-	-
PRINCIPAL	10	59	7	41	-	-	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	-	-	26	93	2	7	-	-
TEACHER	3	11	18	67	6	22	-	-
TRUSTEE	8	11	55	78	6	9	2	3
PRINCIPAL	4	21	15	79	-	-	-	-

Table 6.25The board is well informed about wider educational issues.

In general, there was majority agreement from the perspective of nominees and principals that the boards were well informed on educational issues. Parent and trustee nominees on community boards indicated strongest agreement among the nominees. Trustee nominees on voluntary secondary boards indicated least agreement. Principals on both types of board strongly agreed that the boards were well informed on wider educational issues.

6.3.3 ADMINISTRATIVE THRUST

Three items fall under this category -19.2 relating to maintenance, 19.4 relating to student discipline, and 19.5 relating to finance. School maintenance issues (item 19.2) were also a regular feature of the board agenda.

Item 19.2	Regular	Regular Often			Seldom		Never	
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	20	71	7	25	1	4	-	-
TEACHER	19	63	8	27	3	10	-	-
TRUSTEE	38	68	14	25	4	7	-	-
PRINCIPAL	6	35	8	47	3	18	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	15	54	13	46	-	-		-
TEACHER	13	50	7	27	6	23	-	-
TRUSTEE	40	56	28	39	4	6	-	-
PRINCIPAL	5	26	10	53	3	16	1	5

Table 6.26Maintenance issues raised

The vast majority of all categories of nominee on both types of board indicated that maintenance issues were raised at least often. A large majority of the principals on both types of board indicated a similar view.

The regularity with which pupil discipline issues were raised was the subject of item 19.4. Table 6.27 Pupil discipline issues.

	Regular		Often		Seldom	
Item 19.4	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
SECONDARY						
PARENT	21	75	6	21	1	4
TEACHER	18	56	6	19	8	25
TRUSTEE	28	51	18	33	9	16
PRINCIPAL	6	35	8	47	3	18
COMMUNITY						
PARENT	14	52	8	30	5	19
TEACHER	4	16	12	48	9	36
TRUSTEE	33	47	24	34	13	17
PRINCIPAL	3	16	5	26	11	58

In the view of the nominees discipline issues appear to be a significant concern for boards, more so on voluntary secondary than on community school boards. According to the principals, such issues were raised almost twice as often at voluntary secondary boards than at community boards.

There was a high level of agreement that school finance issues were raised at most boards at least often (Item 19.5).

	Regularly		Often		Seldom	
Item 19.5 SECONDARY	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
PARENT	17	61	6	21	5	18
TEACHER	26	81	4	13	2	6
TRUSTEE	39	70	12	21	5	9
PRINCIPAL	7	44	7	44	2	12
COMMUNITY						
PARENT	14	54	12	46	-	-
TEACHER	17	68	5	20	3	12
TRUSTEE	46	66	18	26	6	8
PRINCIPAL	16	84	3	16	-	-

Table 6.28School finance issues raised.

There was almost unanimous agreement among both nominees and principals that finance issues were a regular part of the board agenda. While finance was raised regularly at meetings, the issue of what was discussed was not pursued in the questionnaire. In comments, three respondents from different voluntary secondary boards – one trustee, two parents – stated that too much time was spent on finance, leaving less time for what they considered more important matters. Two teacher nominees – one community and one voluntary secondary - commented that money was the territory of their principals. The principal decided how it was spent, and the board concurred. Another commented that the whole budget process on his/her voluntary secondary board was not fully understood.

In general, the strategic and educational thrust of the boards relates to their developmental function, while administrative issues relate primarily to maintenance. The responses to item 19 indicate that, in the general view of the respondents, strategic, educational and administrative areas of the board's responsibilities are dealt with at board meetings.

6.3.4 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

There is a clear view in the literature reviewed that an effective board concerns itself primarily with policies, and consciously and deliberately differentiates its role from that of administration. The effective board has a clear sense of its school, what it is now and what it should be in the near and the medium to long-term future. Policies are seen as general rules setting out and promoting this general vision for the school. They are seen as the opposite of administration, understood in terms of day-to-day management. The dominant strand in the literature relating to school boards differentiates the two roles. In this understanding, the primary role of board members is seen as developing, deciding and monitoring the implementation of policy. They study the factors that are shaping the future and how these are likely to influence how the school fulfils its mission. The role of the school administration is seen as being responsible for implementing the board's policies according to procedures agreed by the board. In practice, there is a general, but not unanimous, acceptance that the policy role of the board is often overlooked, that board members do not concern themselves with the long term view, and that they concentrate primarily on current issues and events (Wells and McKibben, 1990; Hellawell, (1990); Arnott et al., 1991; New et al., 1993; Madden, 1993). It also suggests that boards are easily distracted from, or shy away from, the abstract areas of policy development and goal setting in favour of more tangible and public issues usually of an administrative nature. Boards may also be inhibited by an unwillingness of those with formal leadership roles to share management with them. Wohlstetter and Odden (1992, p.533) confirm that site councils "rarely become centrally involved in technical core issues of curriculum and instruction." The focus of the propositions addressed to board members in this study was to find out whether their boards, in their view, were concerned primarily with the strategic or organisational dimensions of their role. Did their ongoing concerns, the issues that got most attention at meetings, show them to be operating pro-actively out of a strategic/policy agenda, or out of an administrative/organisational agenda?

The response to the general items addressed to board members and the analysis of the issues raised regularly at board meetings indicated that while the majority thrust of board activities appeared to be administrative, there was a substantial involvement with policy issues. In support of the policy role being exercised by boards:

- A substantial majority across all categories of respondent, including the principals, indicated that their boards had agreed a set of values according to which they sought to manage their schools.
- It was not unusual for a member to ask what the school stood for, and how it related to matters under discussion at meetings.
- With reference to issues raised at board meetings, there was a large majority agreement from the nominees and the principals on both boards that school policy development issues, future plans for the school, and issues relating to educational change were raised at least regularly at board meetings. Although policy issues were raised, they appeared to have got limited discussion, with the members approving policies presented by the school administration.
- There was a high level of agreement across all categories with the proposition that the board was well-informed about wider educational issues.

The majority of parent, teacher and trustee nominees on both boards indicated that their boards gave precedence to issues relating to the future of the school over current issues, though a large majority of the principals on both types of board did not agree that this was the case. There appears to be different perceptions among nominees and principals on what constitutes future issues. While future issues were raised at board meetings, there were indications that the boards were not proactive on these issues, and that they did not give them priority or in-depth treatment. This might explain the difference in perception between board members who were satisfied that these issues were discussed and principals who were concerned with the outcomes of such discussions. A further analysis into the role the board plays in determining policy is necessary to determine the understanding board members have of policy, and the extent to which policy issues are debated.

In support of the view that the boards exercised a primarily administrative role:

- The perception of the majority of parent, teacher, and community trustee nominees was that the boards approved policies presented to them by the school administration, more than they developed their own board policies. The principals agreed almost unanimously with this perception. A small majority of voluntary secondary trustee nominees did not accept the majority view of the nominees.
- The majority of the community principals and a substantial minority of voluntary secondary principals indicated that their recommendations on policy issues were accepted with little

questioning. Teacher nominees on voluntary secondary boards excepted, all other nominee categories indicated that recommendations made to boards by the principals were questioned. There were substantial minority views indicating that boards were willing to accept policies presented to them by administrations with little questioning, and to be pragmatic rather than policy oriented in their decision-making, and were operating with little reference to their seed documents.

• There was general agreement that issues relating to school finances and school maintenance were raised regularly.

Issues relating to curriculum, staff development, staff performance, student progress, and student discipline link to the educational agenda of boards and, depending on the issue, can link to either policy or administration or overlap the two areas.

- A small majority of the voluntary secondary parent and teacher nominees, and principals indicated that curriculum issues were seldom or never raised at board meetings. The responses from the community board members indicated that curriculum issues were raised more regularly at community board meetings.
- A majority of teacher nominees and principals on both types of board disagreed that staff development issues were raised often at meetings, while a majority of parent and trustee nominees on both boards indicated that they were raised at least often.
- Staff performance issues were not raised often in the view of a large majority of all categories of respondent.
- Apart from the trustee nominees, the majority of the other nominees and the principals indicated that the academic progress of pupils was seldom raised, while pupil discipline was raised often.

It appears that substantial educational debates relating to school policy are rare at board meetings. Deem et al. (1990) and David (1994) had a similar finding. Deem et al. (1995, p. 64) stated that the governing bodies "spent little time on teaching and learning, and as far as organisational and administrative issues were concerned most energy was devoted to those issues affecting governors and governing bodies alone." According to David, groups tended to spend most of their time on issues of discipline, facilities and extracurricular activities. They did this, in her view, because these were the issues they were passionate about, and had some idea how to tackle. Teachers and parents shared the concerns and they felt confident discussing these issues. Curriculum and instruction and related issues were more difficult to deal with for

both the professionals and the non-professionals. Based on this response, the boards did not appear to exercise a substantial role in the core areas of curriculum and instruction. This has implications for board accountability and suggests that the accountability aspects of their role are not appreciated or understood by the boards. Boards need to consciously address this issue as a key element in improving performance and as essential to their effectiveness (David, 1995/96, Wohlstetter et al. 1997). If their reluctance to deal with policy is due to lack of understanding and appreciation of their policy role, or lack of confidence, these issues will also need to be addressed through training and support.

The boards do not appear to have a strong educational agenda. Teacher nominees and principals were in agreement that this was the case. As the educational professionals on the boards, they carry substantial responsibility for this. Most board members indicated that they were well informed on educational issues, and that issues of educational change were raised at least often at board meetings. What is important is not so much the frequency as the relevance of the issues raised and the approach taken to them, hence there is need for deeper investigation.

The role of the principal in policy initiation and development emerges as one of significant influence – understood in terms of his/her capacity to raise issues and to persuade. There is a high level of dependence by the boards on school administrators in the area of policy. Policies or other recommendations from the principal become markers for its deliberations. With the exception of voluntary secondary principals, the majority view indicated that boards would overrule the principal in a situation where they held a different view. As was pointed out by a respondent in the case study (Mungovan, 1994), board members have the ultimate control and if they accept a recommendation from the principal they do in the knowledge that they can reject it also if they did not agree with it.

Developing a school mission and policy, within the parameters of the board's delegated authority outlined in its governing documents, in a collaborative process, would appear to be the primary leadership function of the board of management. Under the Education Act (1998), the accountability of boards is extended and their responsibility for school planning is underlined. At one level this augments the already central role played by the professionals, and the principal in particular (Raab et al. 1997, p. 151). Currently, the boards do not exercise their full *de jure* powers under the terms of their seed documents. At present, the generality of board members

- 238 -

are not deeply involved at strategic level in the planning process, and approve policies after varying amounts of discussion and probing. Levacic (1998, p. 337), based on a study in England, suggested that in this type of situation, the *de facto* powers of the principals had increased except in relatively rare cases.

A voluntary trustee respondent, commenting on the *de facto* role of her board, raised the issue of how much latitude boards had in their areas of responsibility. She indicates that the boards are not clear on how they can influence policy as they perceive that the major issues are determined at national level. In her view, the role of the board tended to be advisory.

I do not see that the boards have any real role in policy. Take curriculum – the courses are determined, so too are class sizes, by the Department and by the teacher unions. Financing is determined at Department level; all we do is try to stretch our inadequate budgets to keep the school going. We have no real discretion to be innovative. Staffing is also regulated and we as a board have no real influence any more on appointments, though we are told that we are the employers. In my view, the main areas of policy are agreed at other levels, particularly at the level of the Department (of Education and Science) and national agreements between teacher unions, school management and others. All that seems to be expected of the board is to implement policy.

Her view mirrored a conclusion of Deem et al. (1995). In their view, boards had significant statutory powers, but the centralised control over curriculum and assessment, resources, and the terms and conditions of service of staff, meant that they had very little influence on significant areas of policy. This is an aspect of the tension raised in the discussion on centralisation versus decentralisation discussed in chapter two. To accept the view that boards have no powers in the area of policy is to accept that they are effectively redundant institutions. While the involvement of the boards as managers of their schools is proportionate to the role allowed to them, it is also related to the understanding they have of their role, and their willingness to develop that role, not only within the macro structure of educational management, but also at the level of the board itself. They have specific responsibilities and if they fail, either intentionally or by omission, to address them, they are failing to be effective as instruments of management in their schools. There is a need for a clear statement that sets out the policy role of the board and the areas it can determine for itself.

Set against the criterion that the primary role of the board is to focus on formulating policies and setting a long-term direction for the school, this outcome suggests that the boards are not effective

in these terms, particularly in areas relating to educational policy. They have an influence on school policy and ultimately decide on policy issues as they arise. They influence its determination, but they are not its primary instigators. According to the data, the issues that got most attention at meetings show them to be operating out of an administrative/organisational agenda rather than out of a strategic/policy agenda. The principals are providing significant leadership. By clearly defining its own role, a board is more likely to ensure that its activities are more explicit and deliberate than ad hoc or reactive, less involved in administrative matters, and to have more time to focus on policy priorities. Without vision the focus of the board will most likely be on day-to-day issues, meaning that it will continue to operate as it has in the past. Change is likely to be seen as a threat to be avoided or deferred as long as possible. Unless leadership inspired by vision sets a path for the future, the school is likely to loose its relevance to the changing needs of those it serves. The conceptualisation of school governance in terms of policy and administration is an aid to understanding of the respective roles of groups within the system. It sets broad thrusts for the activities of the different levels. It is not an absolute. No particular person or group has all the responsibility for leadership and vision. The responsibility is shared. The board structure, the in-school management structures, the parent association, the student council, distributes the responsibility among several groups, and balances the interests of the diverse stakeholders. The literature identifies two extremes within which the board has to find a balance. On the one hand, they can be so involved as to be open to the accusation of micromanagement. On the other hand, they can be so distant from the realities of school life that they tend to endorse everything proposed to them and so are open to the accusation of "rubberstamping".

Factors other than structural influences can shadow the role of the board and can make the scope for devolution of board responsibilities and a clear delineation between policy and administration difficult to prescribe in any detail. Local board practice is also a factor of the vision of board members of their role and their preparation for it. This practice may be determined by the accepted local culture of the board. As set out in chapter three, Kerr (1964), Bailey (1965), Becker (1970), Mann (1975), Boyd (1976), Cistone (1977) discussed the culture of boards. The stance taken by board members towards their schools, how they perceived their role as a board relative to policy, the nature of the relationships and the pragmatic balance effected by the respective talents and personalities of the members on the board, and between the board and its primary stakeholders, related to the cultural norms that informed the board's

operations. Boards operating out of a closed or protective culture, described in the literature as "sacred", placed a high value on professional expertise, were relatively conflict free, and supportive of the administrators. Boards acting out of an open or representative culture, described as "arena", demanded a greater say in policy, encouraged greater debate, and more open decision-making processes. The level and mode of control used by the boards is the essential difference between the two orientations identified in the operations of boards. The following section will discuss the findings of the study relating to orientation, representation, and legitimisation.

6.4 ORIENTATION, REPRESENTATION, AND LEGITIMISATION.

The orientation adopted by boards and board members towards the role and operations of a board is an important determinant of the predominant culture on the board. The concept of orientation is set out and discussed in chapter three, section 3.1.1.and chapter four, section 4.4.6. In the empirical study a number of issues relating to the orientation of the boards are raised. Do board members act as representatives of their nominating groups (Items 26, 27, 28, and 61)? Do they conduct themselves on the board as their nominators would expect them to, and with a responsibility to account to their nominators regarding the work of the board (Items 21, 32), or as nominees who act more according to a personal understanding of issues and school needs? In their decision-making, are they responding to their own consciences and their personal interpretation of what they see as best for the school as a whole, rather than as representatives of their nominating group (Item 23)? Are they willing to compromise when interests come into conflict (Item 25)? Is board confidentiality maintained (Item 29)? As indicated in section 6.1 above, over 60% of the respondents to the current study indicated that they have a professional background in education. According to Ziegler and Tucker (1980), Boulter (1988) and Angus (1989), this could have significant implications for the boards in terms of their culture.

Whether the respondents saw board members acting primarily as representatives of their nominating groups was the focus of Items 27 (item 25 in the case of principals) of the questionnaire.

Item 27	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	2	7	8	29	16	57	2	7
TEACHER.	3	9	12	38	15	47	2	6
TRUSTEE	1	2	14	25	34	61	7	13
PRINCIPAL		-	7	41	9	53	1	6
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	-	-	11	38	17	59	1	3
TEACHER	1	4	12	46	12	46	1	4
TRUSTEE	2	3	22	31	32	46	14	20
PRINCIPAL		-	5	26	13	68	1	5

Table 6.29I believe that the board members see themselves primarily as representatives oftheir nominating group.

The majority of nominees across all categories of nominee believed that board members did not see themselves primarily as representatives of their nominating groups. There was a generally similar support for this view from nominees on both types of boards. Of all the respondents, teacher nominees on both types of board, and voluntary secondary principals were most likely to see board members as acting primarily as representatives. Community school principals indicated least support for the view that nominees saw their role as primarily representational. Over a third of all respondents indicated that board member saw themselves primarily in a representational role.

Whether the nominee respondent acted more according to his/her personal understanding of issues and school needs, than as a representative of his/her nominating group was addressed in item 23. This item personalised the more general statement in item 27.

Ittem 23	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDAR	Y							
PARENT	4	14	15	54	7	25	2	7
TEACHER	2	6	12	38	15	47	3	9
TRUSTEE	16	29	26	47	12	22	1	2
COMMUN.								
PARENT	1	3	19	66	9	31	-	-
TEACHER	1	4	11	46	12	50	-	-
TRUSTEE	19	27	39	56	12	17		-

Table 6.30On the board, I act more according to my personal understanding of issues and
sichool needs, rather than as a representative of my nominating group.

There was a similarity in the pattern between responses from the two types of board to this item and to item 27 above. A substantial majority of parent and trustee nominees agreed that they acted according to their personal understanding of issues and school needs, rather than as representatives. Of the groupings, teachers were more inclined to act in a representational capacity – two thirds in the case of voluntary secondary boards, and a half in the case of community boards. Trustee and parent nominees on both types of board were more likely to act according to their personal understanding than in a representational capacity.

Item 61 (item 60 in the case of the principals) of the questionnaires put a related proposition - that board members tend to put the interests of their nominating groups above the interests of the school.

Table 6.31Board members tend to put the interest of their nominating groups above theinterests of the school

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
Item 61	Ν	%	Ν		N	%	N	%
SECONE	DARY							
PARENT	3	12	2	8	16	62	5	19
TEACHER	-	-	4	13	19	61	8	26
TRUSTEE	1	2	13	23	33	58	10	18
PRINCIPAL	-	-	4	24	6	35	7	41
COMMUN.								
PARENT	-	-	2	7	23	79	4	14
TEACHER	1	4	4	15	20	74	2	7
TRUSTEE	1	1	4	6	40	56	27	38
PRINCIPAL	-	-	4	22	10	56	4	22

There was a strong view from the respondents from both types of board that board members gave priority to the interests of the school. The principals were less positive than the nominees that this was the case. Of the nominees, trustee nominees on voluntary secondary boards were least positive. The response of the teacher nominees is of particular interest given their responses to items 27 and 23 above that indicated that almost half of them operated out a representational stance. In the case of the teachers, it may be that their interests and those of the school correspond making it easier for them to give priority to the interests of the school.

Item 26 queried board members whether or not they often felt a conflict of loyalty between their responsibilities to those who nominated them and the interests of the school.

Item 26	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDA	RY							
PARENT	-	-	2	7	24	86	2	7
TEACHER	3	9	11	34	18	56	-	-
TRUSTEE	3	5	7	13	34	61	12	21
COMMUNI	ΓY							
PARENT	-	-	7	24	19	66	3	10
TEACHER	-	-	8	31	16	62	2	8
TRUSTEE	3	4	3	4	45	63	21	29

Table 6.32I often feel a conflict of loyalty between my responsibilities to those whonominated me, and to the interests of the school.

A large majority of nominee respondents from both types of board indicated that they did not often experience a conflict of loyalty. Trustee and parent nominees were strongest in this view. Teacher nominees on voluntary secondary were most likely to feel conflict, while parent nominees on voluntary secondary boards, and trustee nominees on community boards were least likely to feel conflict. Teacher nominees more than other category of nominee experienced conflicts. Principals were asked to respond to the statement that they believed board members were objective – that they did not impose their own personal agendas (Item 27). As a very limited overall response was received to this item (26%, 9), the response was not used. It may be that the issue was considered too sensitive as it seemed to imply a judgement on the motivation of their board members that principals were not willing to make.

While nominees may take a representational or personal stance on issues, what happens when their interests conflict? Item 25 (Item 24 in the case of principals) addressed this issue.

Item 25	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDAR	RY							
PARENT	4	15	18	67	5	19	-	-
TEACHER	4	13	25	78	3	9	-	-
TRUSTEE	7	13	38	68	9	16	2	4
PRINCIPA	5	29	11	65	1	6	-	-
COMMUNIT	Y							
PARENT	1	4	22	79	5	18	-	-
TEACH.	2	8	23	89	1	4	-	-
TRUSTEE	8	11	56	79	4	6	3	4
PRINC.	9	47	10	53	-	-	-	-

Table 6.33 In reaching decisions, there is a willingness among members to compromise when interest conflict.

Reflecting the responses to items 23 and 61 above, there was general agreement across the different categories of nominee, and between the two types of board, that there was willingness to compromise. Parent nominees on both types of board and trustee nominees on voluntary secondary boards were most likely to disagree. Principals on both boards were almost unanimous in their agreement with the proposition. Compromise can be more difficult where a group within the board is promoting predetermined positions. Such positions are indicative of a representational orientation.

Whether or not board members from the same category of nominee tend to support each other at meetings is an indicator of their orientation – whether they are operating from a personal or representational position. Such support indicates a level of communication and a common interest among the members of the particular group. Item 28 (item 26 in the case of the questionnaire for the principal) invited a response to the statement that parent, teacher, and trustee nominees tend to support each other at meetings.

Item 28	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
SECONDAF	RY							
PARENT	3	11	7	25	13	46	5	18
TEACHER			11	34	16	50	5	16
TRUSTEE	3	6	10	19	34	63	7	13
PRINCIP.	2	12	3	17	9	53	3	18
COMMUNI	ГҮ							
PARENT	1	3	9	31	18	62	1	3
TEACHER	5	19	12	46	8	31	1	4
TRUSTEE	1	1	16	23	42	59	12	17
PRINCIP.	2	11	5	26	11	58	1	5

Table 6.34Nominees from particular groups tend to support one another at meetings (e.g.parents support each other, teachers support each other, trustee nominees support each other).

With the exception of teacher nominees on community boards, a majority of respondents across all other categories indicated nominees from particular groups did not tend to support one another at meetings suggesting that they operated out of a trustee rather than a representative orientation. Trustee nominees were most likely to be of this view. The principals were in general agreement with the majority view. Almost one third of the nominees and one third of the principals disagreed with the majority position.

In Pitkin's (1967) terms, a representative gives feedback to and maintains contact with the represented. Did board members have a responsibility to account to their nominating groups regarding the work of the board? The extent to which they felt this responsibility is an indicator of their orientation. The issue was addressed in item 21 of both questionnaires. Principals were asked if board members had a duty to report.

Item 21	Strong Agree	ly	Agree		Disagre	ee	Strong	•
	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDAR	RY							
PARENT	3	11	21	78	1	4	2	7
TEACHER	19	59	11	34	2	6	-	-
TRUSTEE	12	21	26	46	16	29	2	4
PRINCIP.	4	24	6	35	6	35	1	6
COMMUNI	ГҮ							
PARENT	3	10	15	52	10	35	1	3
TEACHER	12	46	13	50	-	-	1	4
TRUSTEE	11	16	37	52	18	25	5	7
PRINCIP.	1	5	10	53	7	37	1	5

Table 6.35I have a responsibility to account to my nominating group regarding the workof the board.

Overall, three quarters of the nominees agreed or strongly agreed that they did have a responsibility to account to their nominating groups. Teacher nominees on both types of board were almost unanimous in the view that they had a responsibility to account to nominators. Parent nominees on voluntary secondary boards were more likely to agree than their community counterparts. There was a similar level of agreement among trustee nominees on both boards. Over 40% of the principals on each type of board did not support the view that nominees had a responsibility to account to their nominating groups. Accounting to nominating groups requires members to have regular formal contact with their groups.

Whether or not there was a regular formal contact with nominating groups was the focus of item 32.

	Strongly		Agree		Disagree		Strongly	
Item 32	agree						disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
SECONDAR	Y							
PARENT	1	4	9	32	15	54	3	11
TEACHER	6	19	21	66	4	13	1	3
TRUSTEE	5	9	23	41	20	36	8	14
PRINCIPAL	1	6	7	41	6	35	3	18
COMMUNIT	Y							
PARENT	5	17	13	45	11	38	-	-
TEACHER	3	11	14	52	9	33	1	4
TRUSTEE	7	10	15	21	41	57	9	13
PRINCIPAL	-	-	3	16	14	74	2	10

Table 6.36There is regular formal contact between me and my nominating group (parents
or teachers or trustees).

Overall, half of the nominees agreed that they had formal contact. Parent nominees on voluntary secondary boards, and trustee nominees on community boards reported having the least contact. While the vast majority of parent nominees on voluntary boards believed they had a responsibility to account to their nominating group (Item 21), a little over a third indicated that they had regular formal contact with them. Likewise, the majority of trustee nominees felt a responsibility to account to nominators, but a substantially lower number had regular formal contact. The apparently low level of contact between trustee nominees and their nominators reflects responses to other items relating to the trustee – board relationship on community boards. Teacher nominees on voluntary secondary had the most contact. This reflected their response to item 21 regarding accountability to nominating groups. The response from teacher nominees on community boards to this item did not reflect their almost unanimous position on item 21. Principals were asked to respond to the statement that there was regular formal contact between the board and nominating groups (Item 30). In the view of all the principals, less than one third agreed or strongly agreed that there was a regular formal contact between the board and nominators – 47% of voluntary secondary principals and 16% of the community principals. Unless there is contact and ongoing accountability between boards and their constituencies, it is difficult to see how the boards can be inclusive or effective as instruments of participatory democracy. The issue of contact and accountability to nominating groups raises the issue of confidentiality.

Confidentiality relating to the work of the board is required in both the Articles of Management and the Deed of Trust. Article 12 of the Instrument of Management of the Community School specifies that "the business of the board shall be conducted in private and no disclosure of the business shall be made without the authority of the board." Article 14(d) of the Articles of Management for voluntary secondary boards has a similar stipulation. While boards conduct their business in private, the board can decide what aspects, if any, of its business may be disclosed. On the assumption that in political situations of controversy and conflict, confidentiality can be more difficult to maintain, the extent to which it is maintained is an indicator of the orientation of the board. It is in difficult and sensitive situations that the maintenance of confidentiality can be most important. It may be necessary only in such situations. The requirement of confidentiality underlines the understanding that the board is non-representational. Item 29 (27.2 in the case of the principals) put the proposition to nominees that the confidentiality of the board meeting is observed.

Item 29	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	14	50	13	46	-	-	1	4
TEACHER	16	50	13	41	2	6	1	3
TRUSTEE	29	52	22	39	4	7	1	2
PRINCIPAL	8	47	8	47	1	6	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	15	52	13	45	1	3	-	-
TEACHER	12	46	11	42	1	4	2	8
TRUSTEE	40	56	27	38	3	4	2	3
PRINCIPAL	1	5	14	74	4	21	-	-

Table 6.37The confidentiality of the board is observed.

Across all categories of respondent and on both board types, the response indicated a very substantial, though not a unanimous agreement that confidentiality was maintained. While the responses to items 27 and 23 indicated that teacher nominees more than any other grouping acted out of a representational stance and as accountable to their nominating group, this did not impinge on their respect for the confidentiality of the board. This indicates a sense of loyalty to the board and respect for its corporate character.

The orientation of board members and how the work of the board is legitimised becomes particularly evident in the decision-making processes of the board. These processes will be discussed more fully in the following chapter. Here the focus is on whether the boards are willing to take responsibility (Item 46), and to exercise their authority in the context of their role. Do board members perceive their boards as being willing to take decisions, to face the hard issues that arise (Item 13), and to address them objectively (Item 27), reflectively, and by consent (Items 30, 53)?

Many of the decisions taken by the board are predictable and routine and are related to technical matters or situations. Other decisions are taken in response to problem situations and may be less predictable and more difficult. Item 46 (Item 45 of the questionnaire for principals) queried whether the board had on occasion evaded responsibility for an important issue facing the school.

Table 6.38The board has on occasion evaded responsibility for an important issue facingthe school.

the school.								
	Strongly		Agree		Disagree		Strongly	
Item 46	Agree						disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
SECONDAR	Y							
PARENT	1	4	6	21	12	43	9	32
TEACHER	-	-	10	32	12	39	9	29
TRUSTEE	1	2	6	11	34	60	16	28
PRINCIPAL		-	1	6	6	35	10	59
COMMUNIT	ΓY							
PARENT	-	-	6	21	16	55	7	24
TEACHER	3	11	2	7	18	67	4	15
TRUSTEE	1	1	3	4	43	61	23	33
PRINCIPAL		-	1	5	12	63	6	32

Principals and trustee nominees were strongest in the view that the board did not evade responsibility for important issues. Though a large majority of parent and teacher nominees on both types of board indicated a similar view, they were less positive in that view than the trustee nominees and the principals. Almost one third of the teacher nominees on voluntary secondary boards indicated that boards did evade responsibility. In general, there was strong consensus among the nominees hat they did not evade responsibility for important issues. Often the more difficult the issue is, the more related it is to the life of the school and the board and to involve both people and complex issues. Yet, in the responses to item 19 above and in the discussion on policy, there were strong indications that issues relating to policy, staff development and performance, the academic progress of students, and community education did not have priority in board discussions.

Dealing with difficult issues can test the commitment of the board. Usually such issues are difficult to define, take a lot of time to resolve, are demanding of board processes, and need careful and systematic consideration. Board members instanced pupil and teacher discipline issues as examples of difficult issues. Issues relating to the management of an expanding or contracting enrolment, the development and deployment of resources to address particular needs in the school such as disadvantage, adjusting school curriculum and school processes to reflect a school vision and ethos involve difficult decisions. The willingness of the board to deal with difficult issues was raised in item 13.

Item 13	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	1	4	5	18	13	46	9	32
TEACHER	1	3	9	29	12	39	9	29
TRUSTEE	2	4	6	11	30	53	19	33
PRINCIPAL	-	-	-	-	11	65	6	35
COMMUNITY								
(N=128)								
PARENT	2	7	2	7	16	55	9	31
TEACHER	2	7	2	7	14	52	9	33
TRUSTEE	6	8	8	11	32	44	26	36
PRINCIPAL	1	5	1	5	12	63	5	26

Table 6.39Our board is often unwilling to address difficult school issues.

There was a strong view from respondents that there was a willingness to deal with difficult issues. Teacher nominees on voluntary secondary boards indicated least agreement, while voluntary school principals indicated unanimous agreement with the view. Most of the community principals concurred. Raising difficult issues can create particular dilemmas for principals and boards. A community principal pointed to what he/she saw as a difficult position faced by many principals in the absence of established procedures when difficult issues, particularly relating to staff, arise.

Principals are generally not inclined to report unsatisfactory performance of a staff member to the board. There are no proper procedures set out by the Department. Since the principal is generally the only person to deal with an unsatisfactory member of staff, the principal is often open to untrue counter allegations from members of staff, and the board then finds itself adjudicating in a dispute rather than dealing with the main issue.

A community trustee commented that when his/her board had to make hard decisions

- 251 -

... we do our homework. We seek professional advice where necessary, and we are prepared to stand up and be accountable.

Another voluntary secondary trustee respondent commented that when boards appeared to avoid issues, it may be that they

lacked information, time or expertise to address their complexity. Board service is voluntary.

While there is a willingness to raise and address difficult issues, it is important that there are proper procedures and supports in place to enable boards to handle such issues. These comments suggest that these are not in place, and that this is a reason why boards are reluctant to address difficult issues.

A decision taken by one group within the school can have implications for other groups. This interdependence suggests a need for co-ordination across the different groups and for a consultation process that helps identify issues and establish priorities. The ultimate decision will affect all stakeholders in the school. Whether or not board members approach issues from a reflective and consultative stance, taking into account the views of those affected by their decisions is the focus of item 30 (Item 15 in the case of principals). Before reaching important decisions, did the board usually seek input from persons likely to be affected by these decisions?

Table 6.40Before reaching an important decision, the board usually seeks input (reactions,
opinions, information0 from persons likely to be affected by the decision.

Item 30	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDAF	RY (N=115)							
PARENT	7	25	16	57	5	18	-	-
TEACHER	7	22	16	50	7	22	2	6
TRUSTEE	13	24	31	56	9	16	2	4
PRINCIP.	5	29	11	65	1	6	-	-
COMMUNI	TY(N=116							
PARENT	9	31	13	45	7	24	-	-
TEACHER	5	19	10	39	10	39	1	4
TRUSTEE	11	16	50	70	8	11	2	3
PRINCIP.	4	21	14	74	1	5	-	-

A large majority among all nominees and principals on both types of board indicated that boards usually sought input from persons, who were likely to be affected by an important decision, before taking the decision. Principals were more positive that this was the case than the nominee groups. The majority among teacher nominees on voluntary secondary boards was less positive than among any other category. In light of the response to item 32 relating to the level contact with nominating groups that indicated a low level of contact between parent and trustee nominees and their nominators, questions arise about how this consultation takes place, and who is consulted. If the consultation is confined to in-school interests, it goes against the understanding of the board as a forum that is participative and inclusive.

In their approach to issues boards also need to be reflective and deliberative. A willingness to postpone issues about which the board does not have sufficient information is an indicator that the board is reflective and deliberative in its consideration of issues. Item 53 (Item 52 in the questionnaire for the principals) relates to the willingness of boards to wait for further information if it is needed.

Item 53	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	4	15	21	78	2	7	-	-
TEACHER	4	13	25	78	3	9	-	-
TRUSTEE	12	21	43	75	2	4	-	-
PRINCIPAL	2	12	7	41	8	47	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	3	11	22	79	3	11	-	-
TEACHER	3	11	19	70	5	19	-	-
TRUSTEE	9	13	55	78	6	9	1	1
PRINCIPAL	-	-	15	79	3	16	1	5

 Table 6.41
 Important issues raised at meetings are often postponed until further information can be obtained.

There was a strongly positive consensus on the part of voluntary secondary and community nominees that issues were postponed. Almost half of the voluntary secondary principals disagreed with the proposition. They were substantially at variance with their nominee members. The outcome illustrates a division between some voluntary secondary boards and their principals.

In the light of the responses to items 53 a strong negative response might be anticipated to item 35 (Item 34 of the questionnaire for principals).

	Strongly		Agree		Disagree		Strongly	
Item 35	Agree						disagree	
	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDAF	RY (N= 17)							
PARENT	1	4	6	21	12	43	9	32
TEACHER	3	9	5	16	16	50	8	25
TRUSTEE	3	5	4	7	34	60	16	28
PRINCIP.	-	-	1	6	10	59	6	35
COMMUNI	ΓY(N=127)							
PARENT	1	3	2	7	22	76	4	14
TEACHER	3	11	4	15	17	63	3	11
TRUSTEE	3	4	4	6	42	59	22	31
PRINCIP.		-	1	5	11	58	7	37

Table 6.42 Important decisions which, I believe, should be made at board meetings are made outside the meetings.

The majority response from nominees and principals disagreed with the proposition that important decisions, which, in their view, should be made at board meetings, were being made outside of meetings. Principals were almost unanimous in their disagreement. A quarter of the teacher nominees on each type of board disagreed. The overall outcome indicates a respect for the board and its processes among the nominee groups.

6.4.1. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Board orientation is described in terms of a continuum between two opposites – one that puts the independent judgement of the nominee on the board above the wishes of his/her constituency, and the opposite stance that puts constituency wishes first. Board orientation is also discussed in terms of modes of representation - whether board members act primarily as representatives of interest groups, or in a nominee capacity as guardians of the interests of the school. Pitkin (1967) and Mann (1975) distinguished between a "trustee" and a "delegate" form of representation and orientation on boards, between board members acting primarily according to their own judgement and values or as representatives acting primarily according to the views of those represented. The concept of orientation is set out and discussed in chapter three, section 3.1.1.and chapter four,

section 4.4.6. Currently, the members of the boards of management in the voluntary secondary and community schools are described as nominees rather than as representatives. This suggests that the relationship between the board and stakeholder groups should be one of partnership and co-operation in the management of the school. There is potential for conflict if the roles of the board and its constituent groups are seen as mutually exclusive. The debate about whether board members should act primarily out of a "delegate/representative" and "trustee/nominee" orientation on "arena-secular" or "elite-sacred" boards is central to the operation of the board.

Comparing the responses from the two types of board, there was a substantial level of majority agreement across both boards and all nominee categories of respondent, including the principals where relevant, on the following issues:

- In decision-making the interests of the school was given priority over the interests of nominating groups.
- Board members seldom experienced a conflict of interest between their responsibilities to their nominators and to the interests of the school. Teacher nominees on both boards were most likely to experience this conflict.
- In reaching decisions members were willing to compromise when interests were in conflict.
- Members felt that they had a responsibility to account to their nominating groups regarding the work of the board.
- The confidentiality of the board was maintained.
- The board had not evaded responsibility for an important decision facing the school. Voluntary secondary teacher nominees were most likely to disagree.
- There was a strong view that boards went about their business in a reflective and inclusive way through consulting those likely to be affected by the decision, postponing decisions if needed information was lacking, and making its decisions within the meeting and not outside.

The main differences between the respondents related to the issue of representation.

- Teacher nominees on both voluntary secondary and community boards, trustee nominees on community boards, and voluntary secondary principals were most likely to see board members as acting primarily as representatives.
- Teacher nominees on both types of board were more likely than either parent or trustee nominees to act as representatives of their nominating groups more than from a personal understanding of issues and school needs.

- 255 -

- The majority of parent and trustee nominees agreed that they acted according to their personal understanding of issues and school needs. Teacher nominees on community boards were most likely of the groups to support one another at meetings.
- The majority of respondents across all other categories indicated that nominees from particular groups did not tend to support one another at meetings.
- There was a strong minority view among parent and trustee nominees that teacher nominees acted less from an independent stance, and a belief that they acted as teachers' representative in trade union terms, as found by Hanley (1989).

Kogan et al. (1984) found that the group affiliations of the governors did not obviously affect the homogeneity of the governing body in several of the bodies studied. Golby (1990) found that categories of governors, other than teacher governors, accepted a corporate more than a delegated/representational role. In the current study, in the perception of all the categories of nominees including teacher nominees, their group affiliations did not affect their commitment to the school, and their willingness to give priority to its needs above their particular sectional interests. The principals, with a slightly smaller majority, agreed that this was the case. There was a strong negative response from the respondents – including teacher nominees - from both types of board to the proposition that board members tended to put the interests of their nominating groups above the interests of the school. Though board members might act out of a representational stance on issues, the corporate interests of the school got priority when it came to decisions. All groups indicated that they were willing to compromise when there was a conflict between the interests of the school and those of their nominators. The majority of respondents from both types of board indicated that they did not often experience a conflict of loyalty. Of the respondents, teacher nominees indicated a lower level of support for the view, indicating that they, more than other categories, experienced such conflicts and a stronger inclination to act in a representational capacity.

The general view was that the interests of the school got priority when it came to decisions. Yet, all board members, with the exception of the principal, have a role in bringing the perspective of their constituencies to the board. Casting them in the role of nominees appears to underline the primacy of their trustee function on behalf of the school, and its purposes as set out in its seed trust(s), but it is unreasonable to deny them any representational role in presenting the viewpoints of their particular constituencies. It seems more appropriate to posit them as nominees who have

more than a representational interest in the working of the board. This does not undermine the unity of purpose of the board, which is necessarily focused on the students. What it requires is that the boards operate on a basis that ensures that the stakeholders have an opportunity to be heard, to be informed about, and to influence outcomes.

The board needs information about the stakeholders and their wishes and priorities, to communicate with them and to promote their goodwill. The boards appear to have limited contact as boards with their stakeholders and, except for teacher nominees, the majority of board nominees have limited contact with their nominators. Parent nominees on voluntary secondary boards and trustee nominees on community boards reported having the least contact with their nominators. Teacher nominees on voluntary secondary boards had the most contact. Ongoing contacts and communications are factors of both representation and accountability. All categories of nominee respondent recognised that they had a responsibility to account to their nominators, and by implication to have contact with them. Of the constituencies, those of the teachers and the trustees are most homogenous, and those of the parents the most dispersed. The literature indicates an almost universal difficulty experienced by parent nominees on boards to involve their constituencies.

According to Hanley (1989, p. 188), teacher representatives on primary school boards in Ireland had carved for themselves "the strictly limited role of teachers' representatives in trade union terms." She stated (p. 193) that "parent representatives, it would seem, find it easier than teacher representatives to forget their representative status and obligations when sitting on the board." Both these positions may be factors of the nature and motivation of the constituencies represented. In their limited study of devolved school management in Britain, Raab et al. (1997, p. 149) found that links between boards and the generality of parents were tenuous. Attempts by governors to involve them were often met with apathy. Parents seemed to trust the educators and saw no need to become involved to the extent expected of them by the legislative authorities. Parents became active citizens when there was something for them to become active about (p.154). Boyd (1976) made a similar point in the context of the United States, and both Boyd and Raab instanced threatened school closures as an issue that mobilised parents and got them active.

Kogan (1984), Golby (1985 and 1990) and Pascal (1987) refer to difficulties board members had in relating with their constituencies. This was a particular difficulty for parent nominees. Parent nominees often felt that the level of apparent interest among parents in the work of the board and the role of the parent nominee on the board was minimal. Thody (1990 pp. 217-220) argued that the apparent lack of interest may be related to the workload, and a lack of demand among parents for greater representation. Kogan et al. (1984) suggested that diversity in how board members saw their roles stemmed primarily from personal abilities, personal background, and from motivation. There are indications that the relatively quiescent part played by parents on boards of management is changing. This change is particularly evident in school councils in Canada, the United States, and Australia as indicated in chapter two of this study, and is anticipated in the Education Act (Ireland) (1998) in its requirement that parents be actively included in school planning. The support nominees have from their constituencies enhances their legitimacy as board members.

From where do board decisions get their authority? The legitimacy of the board members on the boards comes from their nomination, or their election. The places of the parent nominees on the board are based on having children in the school. The teachers working in the school elect the teacher nominees. The trustees appoint the trustee nominees and their authority comes from the trusts held by the trustees. In the case of the community schools, there were two or more trustees. The board members appeared to have a clear base of authority. Yet, there were comments to the effect that some members were cajoled into service on the board. In the case of parents, there were complaints about the election processes and that election meetings were poorly attended. In the case of teachers, there were complaints that teacher nominees represented particular teacher unions, and not the staff in general. Two trustee nominees complained that their nominators had not briefed them. Legitimacy becomes an issue particularly in areas such as curriculum - which has traditionally been seen as a professional domain, the corporate character of the board, and the balance between responsibility, power and leadership between the board and the school administration represented in the board/principal, and in professional/lay relationship.

In terms of legitimisation, the focus in the literature is on demographic representation on the boards and their capacities to mirror the communities they serve, as well as their capacity to manage the schools on behalf of their communities. As indicated in section 6.1 above, over 60% of the respondents to the current study indicated that they had a professional background in

education. The boards in voluntary secondary and community schools used in this study were not representative according to a demographic definition of representation, so their ability to legitimise the work of the board in demographic terms was limited. They appeared to be, on the basis of the limited data collected, homogeneous and experienced groups in terms of their backgrounds. Parent members of the boards had previous experience as members of committees, and most had a record of involvement in school activities. Teacher nominees excepted, there was limited ongoing formal contact between the nominees and their nominators. Boards did have the capability through their members, or directly, to communicate with their primary stakeholders and to be inclusive in their processes but they did not use it, either because they did not want to or they did not feel the need to do so. There was a strong view that boards went about their business in a reflective and inclusive way through consulting those likely to be affected by the decision, postponing decisions if needed information was lacking, and making its decisions within the meeting and not outside. In the light of the reported lack of formal contact with constituencies, it seems likely that the interests consulted were within the board or the school. To the extent that the boards do not maintain formal contact, however they are seen by individual board members, they are less inclusive, less democratic, and ultimately less effective in terms of their purpose.

The orientation adopted by boards and board members towards the role and operations of a board is a factor of the culture of the board, either determining it or resulting from it. Board culture relates to its beliefs, values and traditions formed over its history. The dominant culture on the board influences the distribution of power within the board, and whether or not that power is shared across a broad base, or whether it is reserved to a governing elite in the core activity of the board – its decision-making. It provides a broad framework for understanding problems and potential solutions. The data suggest that the boards operate according to an "elite/sacred/trustee" orientation. This may be because the issues they considered were non-contentious, as suggested in the discussion on policy. It may also be a factor of responsiveness, of accountability, of the relationships and especially the professional/lay relationship on the board, of the confidence and the willingness of board members to engage with difficult issues, of the openness of board processes. These will be discussed in following sections.

Whether as nominees or representatives, they need to consult and engage with their constituencies. All have an interest in supporting the work of the school, and the avoidance of decisions that might unduly fragment or alienate board members or groups. Responsive boards

are aware of their constituencies and positively engage with them. They take their views and needs into consideration and communicate the board's perspective to them. The following section sets out and discusses the data on responsiveness.

6.5 **RESPONSIVENESS**

Pitkin (1967, p. 209) described representation as "... acting in the interests of the represented, in a manner responsive to them." It involves a two way process between those governing and those being governed. Robinson and Timperley (1996, p. 47) defined the responsive school in these terms:

A school is responsive to the extent that it is open to learning about parental concerns, willing to debate the validity and educational implications of those concerns and able to act on those agreed to be warranted and within its sphere of influence.

In terms of the board of management, responsiveness is a concept that helps describe relationships within the board and between the board and its external environment – the ability of the board to take into account the needs of its primary constituencies, and to develop and maintain healthy relationships with them in responding collaboratively to needs. A key question underlying the responsiveness issue is whether the board of management takes its direction from the needs and opinions of its members and their constituencies, or from the professionals within the school system and their needs and opinions? Responsiveness in this context should not mean responding to the loudest or most persistent interests, or being at the mercy of every demand of individuals or particular interest groups. A responsive relationship between a board and its constituent groups will need to supersede the subjective, and the reactive response. The concept is discussed in chapter three, section 3.1, and chapter four, section 4.4.6.

There is little explicit reference to responsive practices or processes in the seed documents on which the boards are founded, though in the negotiations which led to their formulation and their structures, the issue of representation and the needs of trustees, teachers, and parents in the new structures were major issues. More recently, within a changing ethos of school management, growing community interest and new legislation, more formal processes in the form of published school plans, reports to boards and stakeholders on a regular basis, and greater accountability and transparency from management are being demanded. Currently, these processes are accepted as

good practice in many schools. Structured contact with the stakeholders is primarily the responsibility of the board. They are the people to whom the board is responsible, and on whom it depends if its objectives are to be achieved. At the most basic level, regular formal contact would seem to be an essential element in a responsive relationship between boards and their constituents

Whether or not there was a regular formal contact between nominees and their nominating groups was the focus of item 32 of the questionnaire. This item has already been set out in table 6.36 above as a factor of board orientation. The spread in the response indicates that, with the exception of teacher nominees, there is little structured contact between nominees and their constituencies.

A regular report from the board to its trustees indicating what the board is achieving is a form of responsiveness. Under the terms of their seed documents, the boards are directly accountable to their trustees. Item 43 (Item 42 of the questionnaire for principals) queried whether the board provided periodic reports of its activities to the trustees of the school.

Item 43	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	Ν	%	N	%	N	%
SECONDARY	7							
PARENT	5	19	17	63	4	15	1	4
TEACHER	7	24	12	41	8	28	2	7
TRUSTEE	12	23	25	47	16	30	-	-
PRINCIPAL	2	12	8	47	5	29	2	12
COMMUNITY	Y							
PARENT	1	4	14	54	9	35	2	8
TEACHER	1	4	9	38	12	50	2	8
TRUSTEE	10	15	18	27	30	45	9	13
PRINCIPAL	-	-	10	53	9	47	-	-

Table 6.43The board provides a periodic report (e.g. annual) of its activities to the trusteesof the school.

In the response, there was a marked difference between voluntary secondary and community boards. Voluntary secondary boards were much more likely to provide a periodic report to trustees than community boards. Voluntary secondary principals were less likely to agree that a report was furnished than any other of their nominee groups. Teacher and trustee nominees on

community boards were less likely to agree that reports were furnished than either their parent nominees or their principals. A community trustee commented that he/she is "unsure if a report is sent to the trustees, but I presume it is." There are notable differences in the responses on a factual matter. The response raises questions about communications within the board. If reports are provided, they ought to be discussed and agreed by the boards and all board members ought to be aware of them.

All schools are a part of their local community with a wider responsibility than to their trustees alone. The community environment of the school is the context within which the board exercises its management and leadership roles. Social conditions, cultural change and its impact of students, employment trends, the home environment of the students, changing family values and expectancies are issues of direct relevance for the mission and vision of schools that need to be taken into account in planning. Adverse conditions in the home and in the community can translate into negative behaviours, low educational expectations, unresponsive or out of control students. Item 31 (Item 29 of the questionnaire for principals) queried board members whether or not they spent time at their meetings discussing the concerns of the wider community served by the school. Does the board consider local community concerns?

Item 31	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDARY	(N=116)							
PARENT	1	4	10	36	14	50	3	11
TEACHER	1	3	6	19	16	50	9	28
TRUSTEE	4	7	19	34	32	57	1	2
PRINCIPAL			5	29	9	53	3	18
COMMUNIT	Y(N=127)							
PARENT	1	3	11	38	17	59		
TEACHER			9	35	14	54	3	12
TRUSTEE	4	6	31	43	34	47	3	4
PRINCIPAL	1	5	9	47	8	42	1	5

Table 6.44We spend time at our meetings discussing the concerns of the wider communityserved by the school.

A minority of the respondents from each category of nominee respondent, and from both types of board, indicated that they did discuss community concerns. Community boards were more likely

to spend time discussing the wider concerns. A small majority of community principals agreed with the proposition. The majority view suggests that, at board level, the school functions in relative isolation from its community since wider community issues did not appear to have a priority in board considerations. It is unlikely that principals and staff will be as isolated since they will have immediate contact with the world of their students and their families. Some board members may argue that issues of disadvantage related to dysfunctional families or the local community are not school issues, and while they act as barriers to high educational achievement, addressing the issues is not the task of the board or the school. In the day-to-day functioning of the school, the principal and the teaching staff will be aware of the importance of these issues and their impact. Both boards and the school staff have an obligation to create a positive learning environment for all their students while acknowledging and supporting the role of other agencies that also carry responsibilities for the students and their families.

In its own operations, is the board, from the perspective of its members, responsive to issues of concern to its members at board level? Item 14 sought a response to the view that there were items that individual members might like to raise at the board, but they felt were "off limits." Principals were asked to respond to the statement that at least some board members appeared hesitant to raise issues at board meetings (Item 13).

Table 6.45	There are issues I would like to raise at the board, but I feel that they are "off	
limits."		

	Strongly		Agree		Disagree		Strongly	
Item 14	Agree						disagree	
	N	%	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
SECONDARY	(N=117)							
PARENT	2	7	8	29	14	50	4	14
TEACHER	1	3	6	19	12	38	13	41
TRUSTEE	2	4	6	11	30	53	19	33
PRINCIPAL	1	6	5	29	9	53	2	12
COMMUNITY	Y (N=128)							
PARENT	2	7	9	31	12	41	6	21
TEACHER	3	11	6	22	13	48	5	19
TRUSTEE	3	4	10	14	37	51	22	31
PRINCIPAL	1	5	7	37	11	58	-	-

A large majority of the nominee respondents from both types of board disagreed with the proposition. Trustee nominees were more likely to disagree than teacher nominees, and teacher nominees than parent nominees on both boards. It is notable that parent nominees on both types of board, and teacher nominees on community boards were most likely to agree that there were items that were "off-limits." Issues specifically raised by the respondents were finances, poor teaching, discipline/suspension appeals, and policy issues (unspecified).

Item 34 (Item 32 in the case of principals) of the questionnaire relates in this context to the relative responsiveness of the board to the needs of parents, as against the needs of the professional staff of the school. It invited a response to the statement that board business reflected more closely the needs of the professional staff of the school school staff of the school school staff of the school school staff of the school staff of the school staff of the school school school staff of the school staff of the school school school staff of the school school

	Strongly		Agree		Disagree		Strongly	
Item 34	agree						disagree	
	N	%	Ν	%	N	%	N	%
SECONDARY	(N=117)							
PARENT	4	14	14	50	8	29	2	7
TEACHER	-	-	14	44	17	53	1	3
TRUSTEE	1	2	18	32	34	60	4	7
PRINCIPAL	4	24	4	24	8	47	1	6
COMMUNITY	Y(N=126)							
PARENT	2	7	13	45	12	41	2	7
TEACHER	2	7	7	26	17	63	1	4
TRUSTEE	4	6	16	23	39	56	11	16
PRINCIPAL	-	-	14	74	5	26	-	-

Table 6.46Board business reflects more closely the needs of the professional staff of the
school than the needs of parents.

The response indicates a difference of view between parent nominees and the other nominees. In the perception of the majority of parent nominees, smaller in the case of community than voluntary secondary boards, the boards responded more to the needs of the professionals than to the needs of parents. Trustee nominees on both boards did not agree that this was the case. There was a notable difference between the positions indicated by the two sets of principals, with a large majority of community principals and a substantial minority of voluntary secondary principal agreeing with the proposition. The degree of divergence across the respondent groups suggests that there is a need for the boards to assess how their nominee groups perceive them and how responsive they are to their expectations. One way of influencing the business of the board is through its agenda.

Who sets the agenda and the amount of input board members have into it are factors in determining whose needs get priority at board meetings. This issue is addressed in items 74 and 72.5 are set out in chapter seven, section 2.1 that deals with the processes of the board. These items address the issue of who sets the agenda for board meetings, and whether members propose items for the board agenda. The responses suggest that there are two principal practices – the agenda is set by the principal or by the chairperson and the principal together. The response to item 72.5 indicated that relatively few board nominees proposed items for the agenda. The apparently limited participation by the generality of board members in proposing items for the agenda suggests a limited involvement with the work of the board, or a board culture that precludes such involvement, either tacitly or expressly. In either case, there is a serious issue for board effectiveness to be addressed.

The perception of board members of the ability of the board to respond to issues of concern to them as board members was raised in item 33 (Item 31in the case of the principals).

Item 33	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	3	11	4	14	15	54	6	21
TEACHER	-	-	5	16	20	63	7	22
TRUSTEE	1	2	4	7	36	64	15	27
PRINCIPAL	1	6	4	24	9	53	3	18
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	-	-	6	21	19	66	4	14
TEACHER	3	11	1	4	21	78	2	7
TRUSTEE	1	1	3	4	53	74	15	21
PRINCIPAL	1	5	6	32	11	58	1	5

Table 6.47The board does not seem able to address many of the issues that concern me as amember.

A large majority of all the categories of respondent disagreed with the proposition, and in so doing indicated that the board, in their view, was able to address the issues that concerned them as members. The overall response indicates a higher level of satisfaction among nominees than

among principals with the ability of the board to respond and to be relevant to their respective needs. The opposite might be anticipated given the level of influence principals had on the agenda, and the limited input by the nominees to the agenda. Though the nominees did not contribute substantially to the agenda, the board seemed able to address their issues. Two parent respondents on voluntary secondary boards from professional backgrounds indicated that the issues raised at meetings were often innocuous and relatively peripheral. In the view of a community trustee nominee, an open and full discussion on education did not take place. Board members appeared sausfied that their issues, though they did not appear to be articulated formally in the agenda process, were being dealt with adequately. This outcome suggests that many of the issues are either very general, or that the procedures used by the board allowed members to raise issues at meetings without formal advance notice.

Item 41 (Item 40 in the case of the principals) is also related to the responsiveness of the board to its members and their inclusion in the internal environment of the board – whether or not the board allowed equal access to its membership groups.

Item 41	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	N	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDARY	(N=117)							
PARENT	2	7	3	11	17	61	6	21
TEACHER	2	6	12	38	9	28	9	28
TRUSTEE	-	-	9	16	29	51	19	33
PRINCIPAL	1	6	4	24	8	47	4	24
COMMUNIT	Y(N=128)							
PARENT			5	17	18	62	6	21
TEACHER	1	4	11	41	11	41	4	15
TRUSTEE	5	7	6	8	39	54	22	31
PRINCIPAL	-	-	3	16	9	47	7	37

Table 6.48Some interest groups exercise undue influence on the board.

The generality of the response disagreed with this proposition suggesting that on the boards, each category of membership had influence. Of the teacher nominees, those on voluntary boards were substantially less positive in their level of agreement than their counterparts on the community boards, and were the most likely of all the categories of respondent to agree with the proposition. The overall response of the principals was generally in line with the majority view of the nominees. Item 42 of the questionnaire was an extension of this item. It invited respondents who

believed that some interests groups exercised undue influence to identify the groups in order of perceived influence from a list of five categories. In the light of the majority response to Item 41, the response was small, and the variety in the response was too broad to be useful. It was disregarded in the analysis.

Boards can only be responsive within the terms of their remit. The perception of the members of the adequacy of the general powers vested in the boards was the focus of item 36 (Item 35 in the case of principals).

	Strongly		Agree		Disagree		Strongly	
Item 36	Agree						disagree	
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	2	7	9	32	15	54	2	7
TEACHER	3	9	11	34	14	44	4	13
TRUSTEE	4	7	12	21	35	61	6	11
PRINCIPAL	3	18	4	23	9	53	1	6
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	1	3	5	17	23	79	-	-
TEACHER	1	4	6	22	19	70	-	-
TRUSTEE	4	6	8	11	50	70	9	13
PRINCIPAL	1	6	3	17	13	72	1	6

Table 6.49The powers of the board are too limited to address the needs expressed to it.

The majority view from all categories of nominee respondent in disagreeing with the proposition indicated that they were satisfied with the current powers of the board. Disagreement was lower across all categories of respondent on voluntary secondary than on community boards, suggesting that members on voluntary secondary boards were less satisfied with the powers of their boards than their counterparts on the community boards.

6.5.1 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The need for greater responsiveness to the educational needs of individuals, the community, and the wider society is one of the engines driving the management reform of boards, out of which revised management structures are being developed. As discussed in chapter three and chapter four, section 4.6, responsiveness is a multidimensional concept. It is related in the literature to orientation and legitimacy and to such role-related concepts as board accountability, leadership

and quality. The authority of the board depends to a significant degree on the legitimacy of its powers. A broadly based legitimisation of the board's role assumes a major importance in the context of a participative leadership style. Ideally, if the board has the support and confidence of its stakeholders and the school administration, and if the nominees accept their rights and obligations, it can function as mandated, whether it acts out of either a delegate or trustee orientation.

There was a majority agreement on both voluntary secondary and community boards on the following issues:

- Teacher nominees on both boards maintained most contact with their constituencies. Little contact between the other nominees and their constituencies was reported.
- In the view of the nominee members, community boards were much less likely than the voluntary secondary boards to submit periodic reports to trustees indicating that responsiveness to trustee needs was not a priority for them.
- Boards did not discuss concerns of the wider community.
- Board members did not feel that there were issues that were "off limits" to them. Parent
 nominees on both boards and teacher nominees on community boards were most likely to
 dissent from the general perception.
- The boards were able to address many of the issues that were of concern to them as members. Within this consensus, parent nominees on both boards and community principals indicated the lowest level of agreement. Voluntary secondary board members were more likely than community board members to feel that the powers of their boards were too limited to address the needs expressed to them.
- In the view of parent nominees, the business of the boards reflected the needs of the professional staff. Teacher and trustee nominees disagreed. Community principals indicated that the professional agenda dominated, while voluntary secondary principals did not agree.
- The boards did not evade difficult school issues. Teacher nominees were least likely to agree that this was the case.
- A large majority among all nominees and principals indicated that boards usually sought input from persons affected by their decisions before important decisions were taken.

- The generality of the response disagreed with the proposition that some interest groups exercised undue influence on the boards. Teacher nominees of voluntary secondary boards and trustee nominees on community were most likely to agree with the proposition.
- Board members did not usually suggest items for the board agenda. The chairperson and the principal or the principal alone most commonly set the agenda for the board meetings.
- The majority of each nominee category indicated that their nominators understood the role of the board. The principals agreed with the general view of the nominees.

The literature suggests that the level of contact between the boards and board members with their constituencies, and hence their responsiveness to their needs, is sporadic and individual. While teacher nominees on boards appear to maintain regular contact with their constituents, parent nominees have significant difficulty maintaining contact. The data set out above substantially agrees with this general finding. They suggest that while boards had contact with and mixed levels of exposure to their stakeholders, primarily (if not exclusively) through their nominees on the board, this contact and exposure was not structured and was uneven across the constituencies, depending on the stakeholder-nominee relationship. Cumulatively, they indicate that boards are less likely to develop policy expressive of the stated wishes of their constituencies, as determined through a formal consultative process, and more likely to respond to policies expressive of the boards try to be open to the issues of concern to their members and the needs expressed to them, they do not appear to be proactive in determining needs.

With particular reference to parental involvement, there is a strong view in the literature that the links between boards and the generality of parents are tenuous and attempts by boards to involve them are often met with apathy (Kogan, 1984; Golby, 1985 and 1990; Pascal, 1987; Raab et al. 1997). It opens into a debate about the willingness of people generally and particular groups to become involved in the decision-making processes of society in general and the argument that if there is not a demand to be involved, why try forcing the issue. The argument is about rights and responsibilities. From the perspective of the board as a democratic organisation committed to promote access to its processes and to the information that will make participation possible. A problem facing boards in the light of their lack of contact with constituencies and their communities is their invisibility to them, and a consequent lack of legitimacy.

Boards did not seem to take any account of issues of concern to the community served by their schools. The external environment of the board, at least in so far as the board business was concerned, did not appear to be of concern to the board meetings. As indicated in the literature review set out in chapter two, understanding and taking account of the educational and social environment of the school is a key issue in the reform of the educational systems. The school and its future are tied into its local community. The challenge for the board will be to set a direction for the school in responding to the needs and opportunities in that community. This raises the issues of community representation on the boards and of communications between the board and the community. Currently, there is no formal community representation on the boards and no formal communications process with the community.

While there is some evidence that the boards are responsive in some aspects of their operations, particularly the professional agenda, they are not responsive in terms of the general understanding of responsiveness set out in the literature. Once appointed or elected, the data suggest that they had not established formal mechanisms for relating with their constituents. Not having established formal links with their constituencies, they were unlikely to have established links or developed constructive relationships between their constituencies, thus making broadly based communication and consultation unlikely. There does not appear to be a broad based pro-active approach to policy development at board level that actively includes the constituencies. The relative isolation of the boards as a consequence of their lack of contact with their stakeholders and their school communities may contribute to less controversy at board meetings and a stronger administrative influence on board business. There is evidence in the data of the absence of an "issue" driven agenda rooted in both the internal and external environments of the school. The data give further support to the conclusion set out in the discussion on orientation in the previous section that the boards are functioning according to an "elite" culture. A further analysis into the extent, form and content of what contacts there were is necessary to get reliable data on their thrust, whether it is routine/administrative/informational or policy oriented as well as the reasons for the apparent lack of interaction. An analysis of board agendas and minutes would be helpful to determine the thrust of board discussions, and the extent of "non-professional" input into board meetings.

Findings set out in other sections of this study give indications of board responsiveness. Among these are the findings in regard to policy and board orientation, as already discussed. Issues relating to board accountability, the board/principal relationship, conflict and compromise in decision-making are also related to responsiveness. In the following section, the data relating to accountability are set out and discussed. As a body exercising power on behalf of others, the board has a responsibility to be accountable.

6.6 ACCOUNTABILITY

Like most concepts in the current educational debate, accountability means different things to different people. In all of the education systems reviewed in chapter two and the literature discussed in chapters three and four, there is a common concern with greater accountability, in its definition as well as its extent, and the structures through which it might be rendered (Keohane, 1979; Baron and Howell, 1984; Boehlje, 1994; Jenkinson, 1995). Accountability in all the systems is being underpinned with legislation, and linked to school board responsibilities in the context of decentralisation and devolution. In these systems, a clear accountability framework is emerging. It appears to have three main dimensions. On one dimension, there is accountability to the primary users of the education service – students and their parents. It places an onus on the education system to make available information in different forms such as school plans, examination results and other reports to assist the user in making choices between schools. On a second dimension, there is accountability to a central authority that provides finance and resources for the schools. This dimension seeks accountability for public expenditure and, in practice, requires detailed and extensive reporting by the school on its activities in the form of budget reports, enrolments, courses, schedules, personnel records, and other audit material. There is a new emphasis on management systems that hold the school accountable to the centre.. There appears to be less emphasis on a third dimension of accountability understood in professional terms. Teachers are being called to respond less as professionals, and more as service providers in the context of the broader goals set by society and governments. The recent Education Act (Ireland) (1998) places a strong emphasis on accountability at all levels and across the three dimensions in terms of both content and culture.

In the educational framework as it pertained up until the Education Act (Ireland) (1998) – the context in which this study was conducted - schools functioned within a broad framework of

regulations set down and monitored by the Minister. There was little reference to any accountability to the broader community, though it could be argued that the Minister represented that constituency, and through various initiatives sought to respond to the macro concerns expressed by it regarding the perceived priorities of the educational system, and their relevance to societal needs. In the Education Act (1998), boards are made more obviously accountable to both their local communities and to central government through school plans, whole school evaluation, and other measures which will have the net effect of making schools more accountable to the education market place. As is evident from the responses of the teacher unions and the parents to the Education Act, the accountability provisions of the policy to devolve, and the accountability ethos remain key areas requiring further clarification. While the Education Act underlines the importance of a school's ethos and traditions, it also underlines the accountability of boards, schools, and teachers as professionals in terms of the dimensions identified above. The challenge for boards of management and the Department of Education and Science will be to find ways of holding schools accountable without dominating local decisions, or standardising practice. This is one of the key concerns in the literature around the macro trends in educational management and governance discussed in chapter two of this study.

In the current study, the accountability issues addressed relate more to process than form and to the local focus of that accountability as it was at the time of the study. Board accountability, taken as its ability to have its policies implemented, to oversee and hold the school accountable, and its own willingness to address difficult issues, relates to most areas of board operations. A board has a responsibility and accountability to itself, to the school administration, and to the objectives it sets for the school. It is accountability based on achievement of its agreed objectives. Were the powers of the board sufficient to address the needs expressed to it (Item 36)? To whom did the board members see themselves accountable for the exercise of these powers (Item 51) and was accountability rendered (Item 43)? At its meetings, did the board monitor its own policies and plans (Item 44), periodically review the operations of the school (Item 45), receive financial reports regularly (Item 48), review extra-curricular areas (Item 49)? What was the level of satisfaction among board members with their experience on the board (Item 76)? These are relatively general questions aimed at getting a broad general picture.

To whom is the board accountable – to itself, its trustees and other nominating groups, the Department of Education and Science and other public bodies, parents, pupils, employees, other

educational and training agencies, its local community, the public at large? This listing is not exhaustive. It does indicate a range of interested groups with whom the board interacts. It is accepted that within the listing there are priorities in terms of the relative importance of any agency or group. Under item 51 (Item 50 in the case of the principals) of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate the body to whom the board saw itself as primarily accountable – the trustees of the school, the Department of Education, nominating groups, other. The following table sets out the main thrust of the response – it does not include the "other" category because of the number of sub-groups indicated in the response and the small numbers involved.

Table 6.50The board sees itself as primarily accountable to (a) the trustees of the school, (b)the Department of Education, (c) its nominating group, (d) other ______

Item 51	Trustees		Nominat	ors	Depar	tment
	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
SECONDARY						
PARENT	14	50	8	29	2	7
TEACHER	21	66	5	16	2	6
TRUSTEE	39	68	8	14	3	5
PRINCIPAL	16	94	-	-	-	-
COMMUNITY	7					
PARENT	6	21	3	10	18	62
TEACHER	3	12	3	12	17	65
TRUSTEE	14	21	4	6	37	54
PRINCIPAL	1	6	3	17	12	67

On the voluntary secondary boards, the majority among each category of respondent indicated that their primary responsibility was to their trustees. On the community boards, the majority among each category of nominee indicated that their primary responsibility was to the Department of Education and Science. The vast majority of the voluntary secondary principals indicated that the board was primarily responsible to the trustees, while only one community principal indicated the trustees. Technically, the primary responsibility of the board is to its trustees. The outcome indicates that trustees are not seen by a substantial number of the nominees, especially community board nominees, and almost all the community principals, as the body to whom they are primarily responsible. The low level of recognition of the trustee role in the perception of the community principals is particularly notable, as are the varied responses of the trustee nominees themselves from both boards. It might be expected that the principals as officers of their boards. A community trustee made a distinction between accountability to the Department of Education and

Science and to the trustees. In his/her view, boards were accountable to the Department for finances, property and equipment, but to the trustees and families for ethos and the educational aspects of the school. In the light of the trusts under which the boards operate, this is not a valid distinction.

In the light of the response to item 51, a response to item 43 that indicated a limited level of actual accountability to the trustees might be anticipated from community board nominees in particular. Item 43 (Item 42 in the case of the principals) has already been set out and used in Section 6.3 above in the context of responsiveness. Here it is being used as an indicator of the accountability relationship between the board, as board, and the trustees to whom it is accountable.

	Strongly		Agree		Disagree		Strongly	
Item 43	agree						disagree	
	N	%	Ν	%	N	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	5	19	17	63	4	15	1	4
TEACHER	7	24	12	41	8	28	2	7
TRUSTEE	12	23	25	47	16	30	-	-
PRINCIPAL	7	41	7	41	1	6	2	12
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	1	4	14	54	9	35	2	8
TEACHER	1	4	9	38	12	50	2	8
TRUSTEE	10	15	18	27	30	45	9	13
PRINCIPAL	5	28	11	61	2	11	-	-

Table 6.51 The board provides a periodic report of its activities to the trustees of the school.

Overall, a majority of each category of respondent agreed that a periodic report of the activities of the board was provided to the trustees of the school. This overall majority agreement was due principally to the responses from the voluntary secondary boards. Voluntary secondary boards, in the view of the parent, teacher, and trustee nominees, were much more likely to be accountable through providing a periodic report to trustees than community boards. A minority of community teacher and trustee nominees agreed that a periodic report was furnished. The high level of disagreement between principals and nominees on community boards is notable, as the principal, in the role of secretary to the board, was in a key position in drafting and forwarding such a report. If there is confusion about a key accountability relationship and how the board is addressing that relationship, there is a difficulty with the communications process on the board. All board members including the principals ought to be involved in drafting and in sanctioning reports furnished on behalf of the board, and to be aware that they are submitted.

As an oversight body, the board has a responsibility to review and monitor the implementation of its decisions, and to assess whether they are having the desired results. Also, it has a responsibility to ensure that the school is operating according to the legal and ethical requirements set for it by its own code of values, by its trustees, and the Department of Education and Science. Items 44 and 45 relate to whether or not the board reviews the implementation of its policies and plans and the general operation of the school. They correspond to items 43 and 44 of the questionnaire for principals. Item 44 (Item 43 in the case of principals) of the questionnaire sought a response to the statement that the board monitored the implementation of its policies and plans.

Item 44	Strongly		Agree		Disagree		Strongly	
Item 44	agree	07	21	0.(21	0/	disagree	0/
	N	%	Ν	%	N	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	3	11	17	61	3	11	5	18
TEACHER	1	3	22	69	7	22	2	6
TRUSTEE	9	16	39	70	8	14	-	-
PRINCIPAL	2	12	8	47	5	29	2	12
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	2	7	22	79	3	11	1	4
TEACHER	1	4	23	85	3	11	-	-
TRUSTEE	11	16	49	70	8	11	2	3
PRINCIPAL	-	-	10	53	9	47	-	-

Table 6.52The board monitors the implementation of its policies and plans.

The strong majority view indicated by all respondent groups, and reflected with generally similar frequency across parent, teacher and trustee respondents, was that they did monitor policies. Trustee nominees across the two types of board indicated similarly high levels of agreement. Parent and teacher nominees on voluntary secondary boards expressed lower levels of agreement with the statement than their counterparts on community boards. The principals were much less likely to agree than any category of the nominee members that the boards monitored their own

policies and plans. As the persons responsible and accountable for the implementation of policies, the principals are in a good position to measure the extent to which boards monitor policies and plans. There appears to be a discrepancy between the understandings of what constitutes monitoring of policies and plans held by nominees and principals.

Item 45 (Item 44 in the case of the principals queried whether the board reviewed the operations of the school periodically.

Item 45	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	Ν	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	2	7	18	64	2	7	6	21
TEACHER	2	7	20	65	6	19	3	10
TRUSTEE	8	14	39	70	9	16	-	-
PRINCIPAL	3	18	9	53	3	17	2	12
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	3	11	17	61	7	25	1	4
TEACHER	1	4	23	85	3	11	-	-
TRUSTEE	13	19	43	61	12	17	2	3
PRINCIPAL	-	-	12	63	6	32	1	5

Table 6.53The board reviews the operations of the school periodically.

Overall, a large majority of the nominees was in agreement with the statement that boards reviewed the operations of the school periodically. On this issue, there was not as great a discrepancy between the nominee members and the principals as there was in relation to monitoring of policies and plans as set out in the previous item. Yet, as indicated in the discussion of the responses to item 19, which queried the frequency with which particular issues were raised at meetings, staff issues were seldom raised and when they were raised the discussion was guarded, and comparatively little time was spent discussing the progress of pupils. Comparing the two responses raises questions about what the review involved, and what was its extent.

Items 48, 49 and 50 (Items 47,48 and 49 in the case of the principals) relate to three areas where a board might hold a school accountable – finances, curriculum as represented in academic performance, and extra-curricular activities. Item 48 (Item 47 in the case of the principals) asked nominees to respond to the statement that the board receives financial reports regularly. Principals were asked to respond to the statement that their boards examined the financial reports put before them.

Item 48	Strongly agree	Strongly agree			Disagre	e	Strongly disagree	
	N	%	Ν	%	N	%	N	%
SECONDAR	Y							
PARENT	8	29	20	71	-	-	-	-
TEACHER	18	56	12	38	-	-	1	4
TRUSTEE	26	46	28	49	3	5	1	3
PRINCIPAL	5	29	11	65	1	6	-	-
COMMUNIT	Ϋ́							
PARENT	11	38	18	62	-	-	-	-
TEACHER	18	67	9	33	-	-	-	-
TRUSTEE	39	54	28	39	5	7	-	-
PRINCIPAL	2	11	13	68	4	21	-	-

Table 6.54The board received financial reports regularly.

On both the voluntary secondary and community boards, there was almost unanimous agreement among all categories of nominee respondents that they received financial reports regularly and that they were examined. Finances and financial accountability are considered regularly by the boards. While nominees agreed almost unanimously that financial reports were presented to community boards, just over a fifth of the community principals indicated that these reports were not examined.

On the issue of academic performance, items 48 (item 53 in the case of the principals) put a similar statement to nominees and principals – the board reviews the academic performance of the school.

Table 6.55The board reviews the academic performance of the school.

Item 49	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	N	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDARY								
PARENT	2	7	12	43	12	43	2	7
TEACHER	1	3	15	50	10	33	4	13
TRUSTEE	7	12	29	51	17	30	4	7
PRINCIPAL	2	12	4	24	7	41	4	24
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	2	7	20	69	7	24	_	-
TEACHER	2	8	15	58	7	27	2	8
TRUSTEE	11	15	48	67	11	15	2	3
PRINCIPAL	2	11	9	47	8	42	-	-

Overall, over a third of the nominees and over a half the principals indicated that boards did not review the academic performance of their schools. This review occurred least often in the view of the teacher nominees on both boards, parent nominees on voluntary secondary boards, and the principals on both boards. If the teachers and principals believed that this review should have taken place, as the educational professionals on the board, they carried a substantial responsibility for ensuring that it did take place. That it did not take place indicated that they did not see it as a priority.

On the issue of extra-curricular activities a similar statement was put to nominees and principals – that the board reviewed the extra-curricular areas of the school (e.g. sport). Item 50 (item 49 in the case of the principals) of the nominee questionnaire dealt with this issue.

	Stro	ngly	Agree		Disagr	ee	Strongly	
Item 50	a	gree					disagree	
	Ν	%	N	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDAR	Y							
PARENT	1	4	14	50	11	39	2	7
TEACHER	2	7	20	65	7	23	2	7
TRUSTEE	11	. 19	30	53	14	25	2	4
PRINCIPAL	3	18	6	35	5	29	3	18
COMMUNIT	Ϋ́							
PARENT	2	7	19	66	7	24	1	3
TEACHER	4	15	9	35	13	50	-	-
TRUSTEE	6	9	48	68	13	18	4	6
PRINCIPAL	3	16	8	42	8	42	-	-

Table 6.56The extra-curricular areas of the school are reviewed by the board.

It appears that the review of extra-curricular activities get a higher priority than academic review on voluntary secondary boards, in the view of all the nominee groups and the principals. In the view of the nominee members, particularly teacher nominees, on community boards, extracurricular activities got a little less priority. In the view of the community principals, they got equal priority. While extra curricular activities are an important part of the life of a school and have a claim for consideration by the board, they are not as central as curricular activities. The review of extra-curricular activities tend to be less demanding than the review of academic performance, and this may be the reason why they get a higher priority. If this is the case, it is a negative commentary on the work of the board and its willingness to address core areas of the life of the school.

Kogan et al. (1984) and Kogan (1988) observed in relation to governing bodies in the United Kingdom that the form of accountability they exercised varied according to their own selfunderstanding, that of their local education authorities, and their heads. Underlying this observation is a question – within the macro educational structure, what power have boards to exercise accountability in their own terms and have they been allowed exercise any real role? One item of the current study addressed this question - the perception of the members of the adequacy of the general powers vested in the boards (item 36, Item 35 in the case of the principals). Respondents were invited to agree or disagree with the statement that the powers of the board were too limited to address the needs expressed to it. The response to the item has been set out in full in Table 6.49 in section 6.5 (p. 267) above. The level of agreement with the proposition as set out in Table 6.49 is summarised in the following table.

Item 36	Parent		Teach.		Trustee		Principa	I
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
SECONDARY	11	39	14	43	16	28	7	41
COMMUNITY	6	20	7	26	12	17	4	23

Table 6.57. The powers of the board are too limited to address the needs expressed to it.

The majority view from all categories of nominee respondent in disagreeing with the proposition indicated that they were happy with the current powers of the board. A higher level of agreement found among voluntary secondary respondents, particularly teacher nominees and principals, than among community nominees, indicated their lower level of satisfaction with the powers of their boards.

6.6.1 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The literature and the practice within educational systems present different understandings of accountability ranging from strongly hierarchical to strongly community based. In many of the jurisdictions discussed in chapters two and three, the move is away from an advisory or professional and supportive role for government departments and boards to one of greater accountability based on power rather than deference to professional expertise. Traditionally,

within the systems there has been a tension between accountability understood in bureaucratic or in professional terms. In terms of bureaucracy, the accountability of the school and its staff was to implement policies determined centrally and to follow procedures. In professional terms, school management and staff, as trained, competent, and committed professionals with a commitment to their students claimed an independence and responsibility to make educational decisions to benefit their students. Schools operated as relatively autonomous institutions. A new element is being introduced that is changing the context and thrust of educational accountability. Schools and professional educators are being made accountable in service terms. Schools are called to demonstrate good performance in terms of local expectations, as well as conform to system-wide standards. Parental choice is presented as the ultimate accountability mechanism in many jurisdictions. Boards of management and councils are presented as locally based democratic tools that hold the professionals and the bureaucrats in the system to account for their activities.

The shift in the understanding of educational accountability from a bureaucratically and professionally determined understanding, to an understanding in terms of greater responsiveness to market needs as determined by education consumers - parents and society – involves a change in the culture of schools and their management. As the experience in other jurisdictions demonstrates, it is a slow and complex process. In the United Kingdom, Kogan et al. (1984), though they placed boards in an accountability framework, found that governors in general did not demand accountability from their schools. They described (p.18) the board's role in ensuring accountability as "immanent rather than actual." The movement towards greater public accountability progressed slowly in the 1980s and continues to gather momentum (Sallis, 1988; Golby, 1992; Hill and Booth, 1996).

What kind of accountability role are the boards surveyed in this study exercising currently? The data from the current study indicate that accountability was not a major priority for boards, either rendering it to their nominators and trustees or requiring it from their schools. The community boards were more satisfied with their powers, more likely to monitor the implementation of their policies and plans, to review the operations of the school periodically, and to review its academic performance than were the voluntary secondary boards. Both voluntary secondary and community boards received and reviewed financial reports regularly. Extra curricular activities were also reviewed. In the view of the nominees, community boards were much less likely to provide periodic reports to the trustees than were the voluntary secondary boards, though their

principals did not agree that this was the case. The majority of the community board respondents, including trustee nominees, indicated that their primary accountability was to the Department of Education and Science, while on the voluntary secondary boards, accountability was seen as due primarily to the trustees. In terms of their seed documents, both boards are nominated by and accountable to the trustees. Yet, there was confusion among members about this issue. On the voluntary secondary boards, parent nominees were more likely than either teacher or trustee nominee to indicate that the board was accountable to the Department of Education and Science. Their accountability was for the powers delegated to them. The majority of all categories of respondent indicated that the powers of the board were sufficient to address the needs expressed to it. Voluntary secondary nominees and principals were less satisfied with their powers than their community board counterparts.

The perception of accountability that comes through in the data equates more with a bureaucratic/professional understanding than with an understanding that recognises the legitimacy of a community/market-oriented dimension. A bureaucratic accountability is being demanded by and rendered to the Department of Education and Science. A limited accountability is being demanded by and rendered to voluntary secondary trustees, and little accountability is being demanded by or rendered to community board trustees. In the view of one trustee respondent, boards tend to operate at the level of generalisations. Another commented that unless

...boards got involved, unless they clearly specified responsibilities and expectations with a clear understanding of the available resources, and monitored what was happening in the school in a fair, objective and supportive fashion using a clearly pre-determined process, talk of accountability will be just that – talk.

Boards cannot afford to operate at the level of generalisations and talk; they need to become involved.

Within the boards themselves, there does not appear to be an assertive approach by the members towards accountability to the boards from their schools. It appears that because of the insistence of the Department of Education and Science in seeking accountability in the terms it requires, the rights of the other parties in the partnership are overshadowed. Many board members do not currently recognise the obligations of their boards to these partners.

The apparent distance in the relationships between the community trustees and their boards is of particular concern and interest. From the reported perspective of the board members, the community board trustees appear to be distant and uninvolved beyond nominating their nominees onto the boards. The board members and the principals see themselves as primarily responsible to the Department of Education and Science, and in the view of the majority of board members, the trustees are not furnished with periodic reports. While there may be informal contacts, the data do not indicate a substantial accountability relationship between community boards and their trustees.

Accountability within a decentralised framework, however it is understood, will make new demands on the boards of management, teachers, and parents, and will require a high level of cooperation and responsiveness from all interests. Though the Minister through the Department of Education and Science remains ultimately responsible for the system, the challenge is to find ways of holding schools accountable without interfering with the school ethos, dominating local decisions or standardising practice and supporting the professionalism of teachers. Accountability in this context requires that the school defines and maintains its distinctive character, and complies with centrally specified standards and procedures. It stresses the trustee/ stewardship role of the board of management. The emphasis on accountability for performance offers opportunities to the boards to strengthen their planning and to review their functions. Assessing how well the school is progressing towards its goals, both academic and financial, is an integral part of the planning process. A schedule for the periodic review of existing goals and policies gives an opportunity for their renewal, amendment or abandonment.

Accountability as a concept generates a level of unease among those accountable, and inevitably there will be a degree of tension between boards whose responsibility it is to monitor, and school administrations whose task is one of implementation. Accountability ought to be more than a market response or a "line of authority" management tool holding the system together. Within the broad accountability framework, it ought to be possible to build a balanced relationship between school boards of management and the next tier of management, in the context of devolved authority and responsibilities that encourages variety rather than uniformity in schools. This will require an ongoing development of trust based on participatory values such as collaboration and consensus

6.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter has set out the results and presented a limited discussion of five areas of the survey described in the preceding chapter. The opening section of the chapter set out the information collected relating to background of the board members. In the following four sections, the responses to the questionnaires completed by the board nominees and the principals relating to four areas of the study were presented. These areas were the perception of the members of their board's, their own, and their nominators understanding of their role; the thrust of their activities as board members and whether that thrust included a focus on policy issues; the orientation of the boards towards their role as a determinant of the predominant culture on the board; the responsiveness of the boards in terms of their ability to take into account the needs of their primary constituencies; and board accountability. In the presentation, the responses of the different categories of respondent are differentiated in order to identify the perceptions of the different categories of respondent - parent, teacher and trustee nominees, and principals. The following chapter will present the data on participation at the level of the board and the forms it takes, information, accountability, support and training, and the overall effectiveness of the board, as perceived by the respondents, across each of the main areas identified in the overall framework. There is a strong element of overlap between the two chapters as some items on the questionnaires are used as indicators in more than one area.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RELATIONSHIPS AND PROCESSES

This is the second of two chapters that present an analysis of the data collected through the survey described in chapter five. The previous chapter presented the background data on the respondents, and set out the data on aspects of the roles currently being played by the boards. It dealt with five themes - role, policy or administration, orientation, responsiveness and accountability. A group working effectively together requires organisation, and this requires effective procedures rooted in the value system of the group that supports its objectives. Positive attitudes and values are important in order to create a board ethos that encourages trust, mutual respect, constructive sharing of views, and that promotes objectivity. This chapter deals with forms of participation on boards, board processes, the professional/lay relationships on the boards, training and ongoing support for board, and the overall effectiveness of the boards as perceived by the board members. These themes are interconnected and reflect the ways of acting and behaving characteristic of the boards. They are also related to and occasionally overlap with the areas discussed in the previous chapter. Section one will present and discuss the data on the extent and form of the participation by board members in the work of the board.

7.1 PARTICIPATION

Participation is a process through which different groups and/or individuals involved with an organisation can exercise an influence on and share in its decision-making and problem solving. Nalbandian (1999, p. 190), writing in the context of local government in the United States, argues that participation is no longer a privilege. It is a right. He states that the greatest change local government professionals have seen in the past decade is "the amount and character of participation expected in public policymaking and problem-solving." In the context of the schools, boards of management, as instruments of participatory democracy, ought to provide an opportunity for the primary stakeholders to have an influence on their school, and to offer those affected by school level decisions an opportunity to have input into them. Boards can also be instruments through which schools can be held responsible to their stakeholders and through which stakeholder views and expertise can be communicated to the school. For these things to happen, boards need to involve their stakeholders, and the stakeholders need to involve

themselves with the schools. Stakeholder nominees need to participate in the work of the board, and to involve their constituency groups. As discussed in chapter four, the levels of involvement and participation, and the experience of partnership by members in board activities are indicators of board orientation, board effectiveness, a measure of its devolved authority, and of how open the system is in practice. The following subsections set out how the board members participate in meetings, whether the meetings afford them sufficient time and opportunity to express their views, and whether their views are taken into consideration.

7.1.1. FORMS OF PARTICIPATION

How members perceived the form of their own participation at meetings is the issue raised in item 72 of the nominees' questionnaire. A limited range of strategies through which members might participate was listed – asking questions, listening/taking note of opinions expressed, providing information to the board, making proposals, and proposing items for the agenda. Respondents were asked to indicate the regularity with which they used each strategy.

	VOLU	JNTARY				COMMUNITY				
Parent		Regular	Often	Seldom	Never		Regular	Often	Seldom	Never
	N	%	%	%	%	N	%	%	%	%
Questioning	26	62	39	_	-	27	60	37	4	-
Listening	27	56	44	-	-	29	62	38	-	-
Proposing	26	27	50	19	4	27	19	48	22	11
Informing	25	20	52	28	-	25	22	52	26	-
Agenda	24	17	21	29	33	24	4	33	29	33

Table 7.1	Forms of Participatio	n
-----------	-----------------------	---

	VOLU	JNTARY				COMMUNITY				
Teacher		Regular	Often	Seldom	Never		Regular	Often	Seldom	Never
	N	%	%	%	%	N	%	%	%	%
Questioning	32	65	31	3	-	25	64	32	4	-
Listening	31	52	45	3	-	26	46	50	-	4
Proposing	32	38	38	22	3	24	20	56	24	-
Informing	31	40	43	17	2	23	26	57	17	-
Agenda	30	17	7	47	30	24	4	38	38	20

Trustee	VOLU	JNTARY				COMM	IUNITY			
		Regular	Often	Seldom	Never		Regular	Often	Seldom	Never
	N	%	%	%	%	N	%	%	%	%
Questioning	56	68	32	-	-	71	58	42	-	-
Listening	53	62	35	4	-	40	54	46	-	-
Proposing	46	38	47	11	4	64	39	40	19	3
Informing	56	43	50	5	2	62	44	36	21	-
Agenda	60	20	28	37	16	60	13	27	43	16

Most nominees saw themselves participating in the work of the board and making their views known through questioning, listening, contributing information, and making proposals. Questioning and listening emerge as the most popular strategies of involvement adopted by nominees at board meetings of both types of board. Over a quarter of the parent nominees indicated that they did not provide information. A large majority of the respondents – more trustee and teacher nominees than parent nominees especially on community boards – indicated that they made proposals to the meeting at least often. The percentage of nominees that contributed items to the agenda was uniformly low across the categories. Trustees nominees, particularly on voluntary secondary boards, were most likely, and teacher nominees on voluntary secondary boards were least likely to contribute to the agenda. The agenda process will be discussed in section 7.2.1 below. Item 64 also related to the involvement of board members with their boards. The item invited a response from nominees and principals to the statement that all members became actively involved in board discussions.

Table 7.2	Generally, all members become involved in board deliberation	ions.
-----------	--	-------

Item 64	Strongly Agree		Agree	2	Disag	gree	Strongly. disagree	
	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
VOLUNTARY SEC	CONDARI	N = 116						
PARENT	9	33	15	56	2	7	1	4
TEACHER	10	31	12	38	9	28	1	3
TRUSTEE	24	42	27	47	6	11	-	-
PRINCIPAL	9	53	8	47	-	-	-	-
COMMUNITY(128	8)							
PARENT	5	17	21	72	3	10	-	_
TEACHER	4	15	16	59	6	22	1	4
TRUSTEE	26	36	40	56	6	8	-	-
PRINCIPAL	4	21	15	79	-	-	-	-

A large majority of the nominees agreed – almost a third strongly agreed – that they became involved in board deliberations. There was unanimous agreement among the principals that all board members became involved. Teacher nominees were most likely to dissent from the positions indicated by parent and trustee nominees, and principals. The general view suggests that board members got involved with the board. Did this involvement make a difference in terms of opportunity to express their views? This was the subject of item 59 (Item 58 in the case of the principals).

Item 59	Strong	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		gly ree
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY SEC	ONDARY							
PARENT	11	41	14	52	1	4	1	4
TEACHER	13	41	16	50	2	6	1	3
TRUSTEE	27	47	30	53	-	-	-	-
PRINCIPAL	8	47	9	53	-	-	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	8	29	18	64	2	7	-	-
TEACHER	12	44	15	56	-	-	-	-
TRUSTEE	34	48	37	52	-	-	-	-
PRINCIPAL	12	47	7	53	-	-	-	

Table 7.3 I feel I have an opportunity to express my views at meetings.

The response indicated a strong level of agreement that all categories of respondent – professional and lay - felt that they had an opportunity to express their views at meetings. This suggests that they had an opportunity to play an active role in decisions about the school. To what extent did nominees avail of the opportunity to express their views and contribute to meetings? The board is the forum where nominees and principals speak. Item 73 (Item 66 in the case of the principals) requested respondents to indicate from their personal perspective which of the groups – parent, teacher, trustee nominees – spoke most at meetings, or whether all spoke equally. According to Tannen (1995, p. 138), talk is the lifeblood of management meetings.

Table 7.4From your perspective, with regard to meetings, which of the following groupsspeak most (a) parents; (b) teachers; (c) trustees; (d) all equally?

Item 73	PARENTS	TEACHERS	TRUSTEES	ALL EQUALLY
VOLUNTARY SECONDARY	0	9% (9)	20% (20)	70% (70)
COMMUNITY	0	5% (6)	21%(24)	74% (87)
PRINCIPALS VS	6 %(1)	47% (8)	41% (7)	6% (1)
PRINCIPALS COMM	11% (2)	66% (12)	22% (4)	-

The great majority of the nominees on both boards indicated that all members spoke equally. The principals did not agree and indicated that trustee and teacher nominees spoke most. Parent nominees were not identified as a group that contributed most to meetings by either teacher or parent nominees. While the thrust in the response is that all contributed equally, there is a suggestion, at least, that parent nominees spoke less than either teacher or trustee nominees at meetings of both boards. Tannen (1995) argued that how often people spoke and how they spoke were factors of culture and socialisation. Those who were comfortable speaking in group-situations were most likely to be heard at meetings. On this basis, the parent nominees were most in need of support of the board members. The implication in some of the comments (10 in all) was that the principal contributed unduly. The frequency of contributions from principals may be related to their role as providers of information. Did the nominees and principals feel that what they said was taken into account by their boards in arriving at their decisions? This issue was addressed in item 60 of the questionnaire for nominees and item 59 of the questionnaire for principals.

Item 60	Strong	gly	Agree		Disag	gree	Stron disag	
	N	%	Ν	%	N	%	Ν	%
VOLUNTARY SECO	ONDARY							
PARENT	11	41	14	52	1	4	1	4
TEACHER	13	41	16	50	2	6	1	3
TRUSTEE	27	47	30	53	-	-	-	-
PRINCIPAL	8	47	9	53	-	-	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	8	29	18	64	2	7	-	-
TEACHER	12	44	15	56	-	-	-	-
TRUSTEE	34	48	37	52	-	-	-	-
PRINCIPAL	12	47	7	53	-	-	-	

Table 7.5I feel that the board takes my views into account in arriving at its decisions.

The response indicated a high level of agreement among all categories of respondent – professional and lay – that their views were taken into account by their boards in arriving at their decisions. The degree of participation available to members went beyond consultation on issues to direct influence on the decisions.

Participation in school management implies that participants have power to take an active part in the decision-making process. Board members involve themselves in board meetings. There is general agreement that through their involvement, they have an opportunity to express their views and to influence board decisions. Effective involvement needs sufficient and well-organised time together as a board.

7.1.2 TIME

Participation on the boards can be a mixed blessing. It can demand a significant amount of time, and create a large amount of work for all concerned. Participation is usually in the context of a formal agenda, standing orders, and a timeframe. Agendas may or may not be overloaded and the time available may be extended or limited depending on particular circumstances. Other factors such as the availability of the necessary information or the accepted culture of the particular board may also influence the quality and extent of the participation allowed. In this sub-section the focus is on time.

To allow for participation, and to take effective decisions, board members need sufficient and wellorganised time together as a board. Time for the conduct of board meetings was raised in item 58 of the questionnaire to nominees – the board takes sufficient time to conduct its business. The issue was put in another way to principals in item 57 of their questionnaire – the frequency of board meetings is sufficient for the board to fulfil its role.

Item 58	Stron		Agree	e	Disa	gree	Stror	
	agree						disag	gree
	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%	Ν	%
VOLUNTARY	SECO	NDARY						
PARENT	6	22	19	70	1	4	1	4
TEACHER	11	34	19	59	2	6	-	-
TRUSTEE	23	40	32	56	2	4	-	-
PRINCIPAL	8	47	9	53	-	-	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	6	21	19	68	3	11	-	-
TEACHER	9	33	16	59	2	7	-	-
TRUSTEE	28	40	41	59	1	1	-	-
PRINCIPAL	12	63	7	37	-	-	-	-

Table 7.6The board takes sufficient time to conduct its business. [The frequency ofboard meetings is sufficient for the board to fulfil its role – Principal].

In general, nominees across all the categories were satisfied that the boards were taking sufficient time to conduct their business. The principals concurred that the frequency of meetings was sufficient for the board to fulfil its role.

Comments from the respondents, most of whom indicated that they were satisfied generally, expressed some concerns. The comments indicated that the frequency of meetings ranged from "as needed," to once a month, to once a term. A voluntary secondary teacher nominee, though happy with the frequency and the management of the meetings once per term, linked the issue of the frequency of meetings with the comment that the board was "only a rubber stamp." A community parent nominee wanted more meetings. A voluntary secondary trustee sought "more regular meetings with shorter agendas and with a focus on policy issues." Another called for "about six meetings per year." A community trustee nominee wanted meetings to be held more frequently but not for "cosmetic reasons." The lack of time within the board structures to plan was commented on by a voluntary secondary principal. Another felt that decisions took too long to make at meetings. Prioritising of issues and good chairing would save time and result in greater efficiency. A voluntary secondary parent nominee commented that the time of the board needed to be freed to deal with policy issues, and suggested a project management model throughout the school, with the board and the principal dealing with policy and planning issues only. Another felt that too much time was being spent on "discipline and mismanagement." A community parent nominee commented on meetings being held at inconvenient times for a family person. The availability of board members restricted the number of meetings according to one community principal who believed that more meetings were necessary. The comments suggested a concern among some

members about how the board managed its time. Underlying some of the comments, there appears to be a concern that boards do not engage in substantive discussion and decision-making, and that time is lost due to poor management.

7.1.3 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The board of management structure suggests a partnership that shares power and responsibility locally between parents, teachers, and trustees for the management of their schools. The effective board promotes the participation of these groups. Participation is the cost they pay for involvement and the opportunity to influence the boards. The literature is concerned with equality of access and participation on boards for all members equally. Kogan et al. (1984) found many levels of participation with the principal, chairperson and longer serving governors occupying an inner circle, and an outer circle of people who did not contribute due to some sense of inadequacy. Deem and Brehony (1992, p. 18) stated that their research suggested strongly that governors divided into two groups - a small active core and a much larger, inactive, periphery. According to Pascal (1987, p. 93ff.), there were problems around the issue of partnership in the wider educational system as well as on school governing bodies. Power continued to be distributed unevenly between different elements throughout the system and was vested in particular groups. Morgan (1990, p. 83-90) reported that governors felt inhibited from making worthwhile contributions at governor's meetings because of the perceived dominance of a particular group at the meeting. Golby (1985, p. 51) found different levels of cohesion and partnership on governing bodies. Head teachers were perceived as having, not always overtly, a controlling influence on meetings of the governors through their liaison with the chairperson and through their reports to the governors. The participation of the parent nominees is a particular concern (Kogan et al. 1984; Morgan, 1990: Dixon, 1992; David, 1995-96; Munn; 1998). Golby (1985, p.23) found that their participation related more to their status as professionals in their respective areas of expertise than to their "... contribution as parents or members of the local community."

The data presents a generally similar pattern in the responses from the nominees across both voluntary secondary and community boards.

 Most nominees saw themselves participating in the work of the board They made their views known through questioning, listening, contributing information, and making proposals. Questioning and listening emerged as the most popular strategies for participation. A large majority of all categories also indicated that they made proposals and offered information at board meetings. Parent nominees were the least likely of the groups to contribute in this way. The least used method of participating was to suggest items for the agenda.

- The great majority of the nominees on both boards indicated that all members spoke equally, though parent nominees were not identified by either teacher or trustee nominees, or principals, as a group that contributed most to meetings.
- A large majority of all categories of nominee were in agreement that the boards did take sufficient time to fulfil its role, and principals were in general agreement that the frequency of board meetings was sufficient for the boards to fulfil their role.

The outcomes suggest that in terms of time, and opportunities to express their views, board members were generally satisfied that the boards provide these to them. They also saw themselves as involved in the board. At one level, the concerns found in the literature are not confirmed in the majority view indicated in the data, though there are indications that such concerns exist for some members.

The data raise other concerns about board member participation. Members indicated that questioning and listening were the most popular strategies for participation. In the light of discussion on accountability in chapter six, this questioning is more likely to be eliciting information rather than accountability. The findings in other areas of this study, particularly the data on policy, responsiveness, and accountability set out in chapter six, raise questions about the depth and the thrust of board member involvement. Kogan (1984, p. 56) stated that parent members of boards of governors were often seen by other board members as "observers." There are indications in the data that suggest that parents were not as involved, at least vocally, as other categories. The enhanced role envisaged for school boards, which is common across all the systems discussed in chapter two, goes beyond observer status to full involvement by all board members equally. Observers are not effective partners.

Boards of management, as instruments of participatory management, ought to provide an opportunity for the stakeholders to play their part in decision-making and problem solving, to actively promote stakeholder involvement. They have a responsibility to facilitate participation, to be aware of the issue, and to address it positively and deliberately. This awareness is there at present. Participation is a theme that runs through all the sections of the study. The organisation and management of board meetings and other tasks, functions, and processes of the board have an influence on facilitating participation and board performance. They are indicators of their

commitment to participatory management values. The literature suggests that getting to the stage of "total participation" is a very ambitious, if not unattainable objective, but one that should not be abandoned because of its apparent difficulty. To participate in the board of management process is to take an effective part in decisions that will affect the life of the school and the interests and aspirations of its stakeholders. The following section will set out the findings on board processes.

7.2 BOARD PROCESSES

The presentation of boards of management as nominated boards underlines that they are more than the sum of their members or their interests. Board members are expected to work effectively as groups, to put in place processes that contribute to a positive working environment on the boards, and to put aside any negative organisational or personal factors. Working effectively as a group requires organisation and effective procedures rooted in the value system of the group and that are supportive of its objectives. From the perspective of board members, are their board processes participatory and democratic in their ethos and in their operation? Do the boards function according to procedures that reflect the democratic and collegial values which underpin their existence as perceived by the different groups? Do the processes promote the development of cohesiveness, trust, and encourage leadership within the group? Do they allow for the objective and reflective treatment of issues taking into account the views of the members in arriving at appropriate solutions? These questions relate to three central processes used by boards – setting the agenda, decision-making, and information. The agenda sets the business of the board. Decision-making is the main focus of board activities. Good information is the lifeblood of the board. The climate and the culture that characterise the board also influence board operations. The following subsections will set out the data and discuss aspects of the agenda-setting, decisionmaking and information processes of the board, and the climate and culture of the boards within which these processes take place.

7.2.1. AGENDA

The agenda is a mechanism that can indicate the distribution of power on the board. The agenda setting procedures are indicative of the influence relationship within the board, and/or between the board and its administration. Deciding on the agenda for meetings of the board is essentially setting the business of the board, since the board meeting is the primary focus for board activity and the

first stage in the process that may lead to decisions by the board. According to Hanley (1989, p. 170) those who have responsibility for the agenda typically "define the limits of discussion within the meeting, thereby largely controlling the meeting and the premises of discussion."

Items 74 and 72.5 of the questionnaire for nominees addressed the issue of who set the agenda for board meetings and whether members proposed items for the agenda. Item 74 asked board members to indicate from a range of seven options how the agenda for board meeting was determined. The options given were – chairperson, principal, chairperson and principal, sub-committee, no formal agenda, a set agenda from meeting to meeting, or an agenda set at each meeting by the meeting. The issue was put to principals in similar terms in item 69 of their questionnaire. In the agenda-setting process, the principal is acting in his/her capacity as secretary to the board.

	CHA	AIR	PRIN		CHAI	[R/	STAI	ND	OTH	ER
Item 74					PRIN	C.	AGR	E.		
	Ν	%	N	%	Ν	%	N	%	Ν	%
VOLUNTA	RY SI	ECONDAF	Y							
PARENT	-	-	9	39	13	57	-	-	1	4
TEACHER			14	45	15	48	2	6		
TRUSTEE	1	2	18	35	29	56	-	-	4	8
PRINCIPAI		-	8	50	8	50	-	-	-	-
COMMUNI	TY									
PARENT	1	4	11	39	12	43	-	-	4	14
TEACHER	-	-	16	59	11	41	-	-	-	-
TRUSTEE	1	1	25	37	39	57	-	-	3	4
PRINCIPAI		-	8	42	10	53	-	-	1	5

Table 7.7With regard to your board – who sets the agenda for meetings.

The responses indicated that there were two principal practices – the agenda was set by chairperson and the principal together, or by the principal alone. The respondents categorised as "other" in the table indicated that the agenda, though set by the chairperson and/or the principal, was a standard agenda. If the process of setting the agenda indicates the distribution of influence within the board, the outcome suggests that the chairpersons and principals together, and principals in particular, acting as officers of the board, enjoy a strong position of influence and a share in the authority of the board. The influential position exercised by the chairpersons and principals is further underlined by the response to item 72.5. Nominees were asked if they proposed items for the agenda in item 72.5.

ugenau.								
Item 72.5	Regula	arly	Often	Often		Seldom		
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
VOLUNTARY SEC	ONDARY							
PARENT	4	17	5	21	7	29	8	33
TEACHER	5	17	2	7	14	47	9	30
TRUSTEE	10	20	14	28	19	37	8	16
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	1	4	8	33	7	29	8	33
TEACHER	1	4	9	38	9	38	5	21
TRUSTEE	8	13	16	27	26	43	10	17

Table 7.8I participate actively in board meetings through proposing items for the boardagenda.

All board members have the right to make known their wishes regarding the agenda, to exercise their influence on what is raised and discussed at board meetings, as well as the right not to exercise these rights. Nowhere is it stated explicitly that they may not submit agenda items, though this may be implied in the predominant culture on a particular board. Overall, only a minority of nominees across all categories exercised their right and proposed items for the agenda at least often.

Board members as equal partners have power to determine the pattern of authority within the board. As partners, they are expected to take part in the process of determining where power resides on the board and what uses of power are legitimate. The willingness of members to participate in the board process is an indicator of the locus of power on boards. All members need to be empowered and to be willing to claim and to exercise their influence. Primary among the processes of the board where this influence is exercised is in its decision-making.

7.2.2 DECISION-MAKING

Reference has already been made to the decision-making processes as an indicator of the orientation of board members in chapter six, section four dealing with orientation. Following the literature discussed in chapter four, sections 4.4.2 and 4.4.6, boards that functioned according to a nominee style, as described in those sections, tended to have a relative lack of dissent and apparent unanimity in their deliberations. Boards operating according to a representative or delegate style had less consensus and higher levels of conflict. The data presented in chapter six, section four, indicated that board members tended to operate out of a nominee/trustee orientation, rather than a

representative style. Does the decision-making process on the board support this view? Board members were asked to indicate their perception of how their boards reached decisions – by a majority vote (Item 40), or by agreement/consensus (Item 62), and whether their decisions were generally unanimous (Item 69), and were supported by the board members (Item 63).

Voting is a quantitative more than a qualitative method of decision-making. Consensus is a process of synthesising may different elements together. In the consensus model, an effort is made to hear everyone's viewpoint and to incorporate it into the decision. On a board of management characterised by conflict, decisions by way of a majority vote might be anticipated. On a board where decisions are reached by consensus, it might be anticipated that differences are worked through in an effort to reach the optimum solution acceptable to all parties. A board committed to a consensus model is not likely to be free of conflict, since consensus deliberately sets out to address all views. It is not easy to achieve. In reaching its decision, a board may use different forms of decision-making at different stages, including majority vote. Voting is a win or loose model, while the consensus model tries to accommodate the input of each member. Almost by definition, consensus style decision-making procedures are process oriented, and need time and resources in the form of conflict resolution and group facilitation skills. As processes, decisionmaking either by vote, or through consensus, requires the active involvement of the decisionmakers. The process through which the board reaches its ultimate decision indicates its type in terms of orientation or style. Item 40 of the nominee questionnaire (Item 39 of the questionnaire for principals) invited a response to the statement that board decisions are taken usually through majority vote of the members rather than by consensus.

Item 40	Strongly Agree		Agree	Agree		Disagree		gly ee
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
VOLUNTARY SECO	NDARY							
PARENT	4	14	9	32	13	46	2	7
TEACHER	-	-	3	9	20	63	9	28
TRUSTEE	2	4	12	21	28	50	14	25
PRINCIPAL	1	6	-	-	9	53	7	41
COLOUNTY								
COMMUNITY			10	25	10	(0)		2
PARENT	-	-	10	35	18	62	1	3
TEACHER	1	4	4	15	18	69	3	12
TRUSTEE	3	4	15	21	43	61	10	14
PRINCIPAL	-	-	-	-	7	37	12	63

Table 7.9Board decisions are taken usually through majority vote of the members ratherthan by consensus.

In disagreeing with the proposition, the majority of the nominees indicated that decisions on their boards were reached by consensus rather than majority vote. Almost all the voluntary secondary principals and all the community principals agreed with the majority perception. An opposing view was put in item 62 of the nominee questionnaire and item 61 of the principal questionnaire. This item invited a response to the statement that most of the decisions are arrived at by agreement rather than by taking a vote.

Item 62	Strong agree	gly	Agree		Disag	ree	Strong		
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%	
VOLUNTARY SEC	ONDARY								
PARENT	5	19	20	74	2	7	-	-	
TEACHER	15	47	16	50	1	3	-	-	
TRUSTEE	14	25	36	64	5	9	1	2	
PRINCIPAL	8	47	8	47	1	6	-	-	
COMMUNITY									
PARENT	4	14	24	83	1	3	-	-	
TEACHER	4	15	22	82	1	4	-	-	
TRUSTEE	26	37	41	58	3	4	1	1	
PRINCIPAL	10	53	9	47	-	-	-	-	

Table 7.10Most of the decisions are arrived at by agreement rather than by taking a vote.

As might be expected in the light of the response to item 40, there was a strong consensus across all categories of respondent that decisions were arrived at by agreement rather than by vote. Taking the two items (Item 40 and 62), it seems safe to conclude that decision-making by majority vote is the exception on both voluntary secondary and community boards. Reaching consensus is the more frequent and preferred route to decisions on the boards.

Taking a decision by consensus or agreement is to use a particular process that enables all board members to be supportive of, though not necessarily in full agreement with the decision. It is not the same as reaching a majority or unanimous decision. To wait for unanimity on some issues might be to postpone a decision indefinitely. Item 69 (Item 67 in the case of the principals) asked if board decisions were generally unanimous.

Item 69	Regular		Often		Seldom		
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	
VOLUNTAF	RY SECO	NDARY					
PARENT	14	54	11	42	1	4	
TEACHER	16	50	15	47	1	3	
TRUSTEE	30	54	26	46	-	-	
PRINCIPAL	10	59	7	41	-	-	
COMMUNIT	ГҮ						
PARENT	15	54	12	43	1	4	
TEACHER	14	52	13	48	-	-	
TRUSTEE	43	61	28	39	-	-	
PRINCIPAL	16	84	3	16	-	-	

Table 7.11Board decisions are generally unanimous.

In the perceptions of the majority of all categories of respondent, the decisions of their boards were generally unanimous. Irrespective of how board decisions are reached, board members are bound by them and are not free to disclaim them. After a decision is made, do all the members support it? This issue was addressed in Item 63 (Item 62 of the questionnaire for principals) as an indicator of group loyalty.

Item 63	Strong	ly	Agree		Disag	ree	
	agree						
	N	%	Ν	%	N	%	
VOLUNTARY SEC	ONDARY						
PARENT	6	22	20	74	1	4	
TEACHER	12	38	19	59	1	3	
TRUSTEE	19	34	33	59	4	7	
PRINCIPAL	9	53	8	47	-	-	
COMMUNITY							
PARENT	3	11	21	75	4	14	
TEACHER	8	30	19	70	-	-	
TRUSTEE	29	41	41	58	1	1	
PRINCIPAL	4	21	15	79	-	-	
							_

 Table 7.12
 After a decision is made, it is supported by all the members.

The response indicates an almost unanimous agreement across all groups and between the boards that all the members supported decisions, once made. All the principals agreed – over a third strongly agreed - that all members supported board decisions. Lack of support could delay or undermine the implementation of initiatives. The response suggests that there is a high level of

group loyalty among the board members as indicated by their commitment to supporting board decisions.

The general picture that emerges is of boards that seek a consensus style of decision-making, culminating in generally unanimous decisions, which get general support from all the board members. These findings supported the view that the board members tended to operate out of a nominee/trustee orientation, rather than a representative style. Well-informed board members indicate a board that is committed to participation. Adequate and appropriate information is a key to effective decision-making.

7.2.3 INFORMATION – OPEN OR RESTRICTED

Board member effectiveness requires adequate information, not just about the school, but also about the broad educational context within which the school operates (Kogan, 1984, Brooksbank 1987, Thody 1992). Boards need adequate information in an appropriate form for the different types of decisions being made - dealing with curriculum, allocating budgets, determining school policies. They need a broad range of up-to-date information about the school and the context of its This will include information about student progress, about how the different operations. stakeholders view the school, as well as the resources available. Those who process information for the board wield substantial power and influence in defining issues, controlling the flow of information to the board, and establishing an agenda for the board. Taylor (1977, p. 58) called for "an effective but unobtrusive information system for the governing body." Kogan et al. (1984) pointed to a difficulty governors were experiencing in monitoring the performance of their schools, and suggested that this was due to their difficulties in getting information. Hanley (1989) indicated that parents on school boards were dependent on the professionals for a range of information and knowledge at meetings. One particular area of dependency was that of curriculum (Hanley, 1989; Golby, 1985; Shearn, 1995). Levacic (1995, p. 337) stated that most governing bodies relied on headteachers for advice, and, in most cases, accepted that advice, after some questioning. She suggested that this situation was "because of governors' lack of expertise and time compared with the headteacher who, by virtue of the post, controls information flows to and from governors." A substantial amount of the information used by the board for decision-making is filtered through the professionals, and in particular the principal, though boards also source substantial information independently. Alderfer (1986, p. 44), writing out of the experience of business boards, asserted that chief executives make a clear choice, actively or unconsciously, about how much they disclose

to, and how much commentary they invite from their boards. In this way they tend to control their boards, and controlled boards create less turbulence and upset for the administrators than active and open boards.

A number of items of the questionnaires related to the information and information processes within the board. Do board members feel they have sufficient information about the board and the school (Item 54)? Do they have equality of access to information (Item 56)? Are they well informed about wider educational issues (Item 57), and have they sufficient understanding of the technical information needed to manage the school (Item 68)? Are they proactive in seeking out the information they need (Item 55)? Are there formal exchanges between the board and its constituencies concerning board activities (Items 32, 43)?

Were board members comfortable in actively seeking information about the school? Item 54 queried whether or not there were aspects of the school a board member would like to know more about but did not feel comfortable inquiring about them. The query to principals (item 53) was along similar lines – some board members appear reticent in enquiring about the school.

<u>_</u>		- 1						
Item 54	Strong agree	Strongly agree			Disag	ree	Strong disagr	
	N	%	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
VOLUNTARY SEC	CONDARY							
PARENT	5	19	4	15	15	56	3	11
TEACHER	-	-	4	13	19	59	9	28
TRUSTEE	2	4	9	16	32	56	14	25
PRINCIPAL	-	-	4	23	11	65	2	12
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	3	10	9	31	16	55	1	3
TEACHER	2	7	6	22	16	59	3	11
TRUSTEE	3	4	9	13	47	65	13	18
PRINCIPAL	1	6	4	23	12	71	-	-

Table 7.13 There are aspects of the school I would like to know more about as a board member, but I do not feel comfortable enquiring about them. [Some board members appear reticent in enquiring about the school – Principal].

The majority of the respondents from each category of respondent disagreed with the proposition that they were uncomfortable enquiring about aspects of the school. There was a substantial minority of board members, especially of parent nominees on both boards, who felt uncomfortable enquiring about at least some aspects of their schools. The response from the principals appeared to corroborate this. Almost a quarter of the principals agreed that board members appeared reticent in enquiring about the school. On the assumption that good information is important in decision-making and supportive of board member participation, to the extent that board members were uncomfortable seeking, or were lacking information, the board processes were less effective.

Access to information was also addressed in item 56. Nominees were queried whether or not other members seemed to have information that they lacked personally on key issues relating to work of the board. Principals were asked (item 54) if the officers of the board (chairperson, secretary) made an effort to ensure that all members have similar information on important issues on the agenda.

Table 7.14 Other board members seem to have information that I lack on key issues relating	
to the work of the board. [The officers of the board (chairperson and/or secretary) make an effort	
to ensure that all members have similar information on important issues on the agenda -	
Principals].	

Itom 56	Strong	1	Agree	A man			Steens	1
Item 56		Strongly Agree			Disag	ree	Strong disagr	
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY SECO	ONDARY							
PARENT	2	7	2	7	20	74	3	11
TEACHER	-	-	8	25	17	53	7	22
TRUSTEE			4	7	42	74	11	19
PRINCIPAL	9	53	7	41	1	6	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	1	3	11	38	16	55	1	3
TEACHER	2	7	1	4	22	82	2	7
TRUSTEE	-	-	6	9	51	72	14	20
PRINCIPAL	7	37	11	58	1	5	-	-

A large majority of the nominee respondents disagreed with the proposition that other board members seemed to have information that they themselves lacked at meetings. Parent nominees on community boards indicated strongest agreement with the proposition. The principals appear to be the primary providers of information. Almost all of the principals agreed that efforts were made to ensure that all members were informed on important agenda issues. From the perspective of the information provider, providing information can be both a difficult and sensitive area since the information needs to be appropriate to the task in hand in the interests of time, and of expeditious and informed decision-making. Sensitive evaluative or personal information that may be confidential can be particularly difficult to handle for both principals and board members. As suggested by one principal, the provider may be open to accusations of bias, distortion or

selectivity. In comments, respondents suggested that information should be provided to meetings from a source other than the principal. They mentioned the deputy principal, the teaching staff, and students as potential sources of this information. The comments suggest that there is a need for more contact between the board members and the school.

Effective board members ensure that they obtain the information they need for the task in hand, as well as for their broader role. Item 55 (Item 56 in the case of the principals) related to the independence of nominees in seeking information. This item is also a measure of their broader independence as nominees.

Table 7.15I actively seek out information myself rather than wait for it to be given at the
board meeting. [Board members, at least occasionally, seek information about the school outside
of board meetings – Principals]

Item 55	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	N	%	Ν	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY SECONI	DARY							
PARENT	-	-	17	63	10	37	-	-
TEACHER	4	13	13	41	13	41	2	6
TRUSTEE	4	7	27	47	26	46	-	-
PRINCIPAL	-	-	8	53	5	33	2	13
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	2	7	16	55	11	38	-	-
TEACHER	2	7	21	78	4	15	-	-
TRUSTEE	7	10	36	51	22	31	6	9
PRINCIPAL	1	5	12	63	6	32	-	-

The majority of each category of nominee indicated that they did not rely on the board meeting as their only source of information. In the perception of their respective principals, community nominees were more likely than voluntary secondary nominees to seek information outside of the board meetings. A substantial minority (39%) of nominees waited for information to be provided at the board meetings. This indicated a corresponding level of dependence among these nominees on the board meetings as the primary source of their information, a practice that indicates a low level of involvement with board related issues between meetings, or a tenuous relationship with the board, or with the school.

Item 68 raised the issue of whether or not nominees felt that individually they had sufficient technical information needed in their role. Principals were asked (Item 73) if most board members had an adequate understanding of the technical information needed to manage the school. This issue related to both the information and training needs of board members.

Item 68	Strong	ly	Agree		Disag	ree	Strongly	
	agree	agree					disagr	ree
	N	%	Ν	%	N	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY SECC	ONDARY							
PARENT	4	16	18	72	3	12	-	-
TEACHER	12	39	13	42	6	19	-	-
TRUSTEE	13	23	36	63	8	14	-	-
PRINCIPAL	1	6	8	47	7	41	1	6
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	-	-	22	76	7	24	-	-
TEACHER	10	37	16	59	1	4	-	-
TRUSTEE	21	30	42	59	7	10	1	1
PRINCIPAL	2	11	14	74	3	16	-	-

Table 7.16I have sufficient understanding of the technical information needed to managethe school. [Most members have an adequate understanding of the technical information neededto run the school – Principals].

From the perspective of the nominees, there was a strong positive view that they had a sufficient understanding of the technical information needed to manage the school. On the voluntary secondary boards, the confidence nominees appeared to have in their understanding of the technical information needed was not shared to the same degree by their principals. In the case of the community boards it was substantially shared. The variety and technical nature of the information required was a concern to some respondents. Despite being interested and committed, lay members in particular found it difficult to afford the time to immerse themselves in all the developments, and to carry out their responsibilities conscientiously. The response raises the issue of the type of information board members need and what principals understand they may need.

Item 33 of the questionnaire addressed to principals invited a response to the statement that, at times, the board had appeared unaware of the impact its decisions would have within the school.

	Stron	gly	Agre	e	Disag	gree	Stron	igly
Item 33	Agree					Disagree		
Principals	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY SECO	NDARY	7						
PRINCIPALS	0	-	5	29	9	53	3	18
COMMUNITY								
PRINCIPALS	0	-	3	16	12	63	4	21

Table 7.17 At times, the board has appeared unaware of the impact its decisions will have within the school.

In disagreeing with the proposition, the majority of the principals on both voluntary secondary and community boards indicated that their boards were aware of the potential impact of their decisions within the school. The response suggests that boards in arriving at their decisions consider their potential impact on the school, and that they have an understanding of the in-school context of their decisions. Their dependence on the professionals for information about the school raises doubts about the level of objective understanding of the internal environment of the school where many of these decisions are likely to impact.

Information flow and communication happens at informal and formal levels in the context of contact and interaction within the board, and with its external environment and can be of different types. Item 32 enquired whether or not there was a regular formal contact between the board and its external environment represented by its nominating groups – parents, teachers, and trustees. The response to this item, already set out in detail in chapter six, section 6.4 (p.248) above, is summarised in the following table. This table shows only the levels of agreement with the propositions from the nominees and principals.

Item 32	Paren	t	Teach	1.	Trust	ee	Princ	cipal
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDARY	10	36	27	84	28	50	8	47
COMMUNITY	18	62	17	63	22	31	3	16

Table 7.18 There is regular formal contact between my nominating group and me.

Just over half of all the nominee respondents indicated that there was contact, while less than a third of all the principals agreed. The outcome suggests that the level of formal exchanges between parent and trustee nominees and their nominators is limited. Consequently the nominators have little information concerning the activities of many boards, and many board members are uninformed about the concerns of their nominators. There are no formal structures specified in the seed documents through which the activities of the board can be communicated.

Many boards use reports agreed by the boards as a method through which information on board activities are communicated to the respective nominating groups

Board operations take place within specific conditions of space and time, through the activities of a group of persons who are active and also interactive among themselves. Many interwoven and continuous processes are at work on boards. The inter-relationships, attitudes, beliefs, expectations, experiences, actions and values of people - parents, teachers, trustees - individually and collectively feed into a board culture, which may subtly, but firmly, determine what can and cannot happen, be said or not said at board meetings, in the school or in the wider community. In the following section, the climate of board meetings will be discussed.

7.2.4 BOARD MEETINGS – CLIMATE

Climate and culture are distinct but related concepts that affect how well the board of management operates. Climate refers to the general atmosphere on the board. It is a factor of values and attitudes that reflect how board members feel about themselves and their boards. Respect, trust, morale, cohesiveness, communications, opportunities for participation are taken as indicators of a positive climate. Culture refers to common understandings developed out of shared experiences that boards bring to their operations. These understandings tend to be taken for granted and operate in the background. The term, according to Schein (1985), quoted in Gonder and Hynes (1994, p. 13), refers to basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation. These assumptions and beliefs operate unconsciously and define in a "taken for granted" fashion an organisation's views of itself and its environment. They are learned responses that are taken for granted because they solve problems repeatedly and reliably. Argyris (1986) described culture in terms of what gives meaning and identity to a group - what is visible and explicit in the group, the values that underpin what is visible, and the assumptions that are often taken for granted and implicit. As a system of values and assumptions that can be objectified, or as a pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a culture informs and defines perceived reality. Peters and Waterman (1982, p. 281) stated that all the better performing companies "... had a well defined set of guiding beliefs." In their view, a strong culture that captured and held new members was an essential feature for the success of an organisation. Culture is a complex phenomenon that sets markers for the exercise of power and rules for action within the board. Culture and climate inform the context in which the processes operate.

Hosmer (1995, p. 379) argued that there was a widespread agreement on the importance of trust in human conduct, but that there appeared to be an equally widespread lack of agreement on a suitable definition of the concept. Hosmer reviewed two sets of literature – from organisational theory and from moral philosophy - in arriving at a single definition from the two intellectual traditions. He argued (p. 400) that trust was

 \dots the expectation by a person, group or firm of ethically justifiable behaviour – that is, morally correct decisions and actions based upon ethical principles of analysis – on the part of the other person, group, or firm in a joint endeavour...

As a definition, it begs many questions, but it does have an underlying assumption of an obligation by the two parties to a trust – the person trusting and the trusted person – to each other. It covers individual expectations, interpersonal relations, social and ethical norms of behaviour. Applied to the board structures, it implies co-operation, group-spirit, and the avoidance of opportunistic behaviours between members and groups. According to Das and Teng, (1998, p. 491), trust generates confidence. A low level of confidence may lead to suspicions and negative working relationships.

Iannacone and Lutz (1970, p. 29) concluded that boards had their greatest power at times of crisis, but at moments of lesser intensity, which was most of the time, policies tended to be arrived at by consensus. Conflict was avoided. The findings thus far in the current study appear to concur with this conclusion, and suggest a pattern of basic assumptions, or a culture on the boards that allows the educational professionals significant control. Items 38, 39, and 72 relate to the climate on the board and at board meetings. The presence or absence of openness, personal agendas, commitment, and good social relationships influence climate. Is there a group spirit, and a sense of cohesiveness among members of the board? Is there an atmosphere of openness and trust at board meetings? How do members participate at meetings? Similar items were addressed to principals in items 37, 38 and 68 of their questionnaire.

Item 39 (Item 38 in the case of the principals) invited a response to the statement that there was an atmosphere of openness and trust at board meetings. Openness implies a willingness and ability among members to share information, ideas, reactions, and feelings about the issues before the board. At the personal and interpersonal levels, trust relates to the level of comfort the board member feels in his/her relationship with the board and fellow members, and his/her confidence that contributions made will be accepted and considered. It does not mean that differing ideas and

opposing points of view are suppressed, rather that there is an openness to address them in a supportive and co-operative board environment.

Item 39	Strongl	у			Disag	ree	Strong	
	Agree		Agree				disagr	ee
	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY	SECON	DARY						
PARENT	10	36	15	54	3	11	-	-
TEACHER	13	42	9	29	8	26	1	3
TRUSTEE	26	46	27	47	4	7	-	-
PRINCIPAL	10	59	7	41	-	-	-	-
COMMUNIT	Y							
PARENT	8	28	17	59	4	14	-	-
TEACHER	4	15	17	63	6	22	-	-
TRUSTEE	30	43	36	51	3	4	1	1
PRINCIPAL	7	37	12	63	-	-	-	-

 Table 7.19
 There is an atmosphere of openness and trust at the board meetings.

While the general response to item 39 was not as positive as the response to item 38 set out below in table 7.20, in general it strongly supported the view that openness and trust characterised board meetings. The response was least positive among teacher nominees. This may relate to their response to item 27 set out in table 6.29. In that item, almost half of the teacher nominees indicated that they saw their role on boards in representational terms. The overall response suggests that board members have confidence in the goodwill of the board and its leadership, and that, in general, they perceive it to be honest, unbiased, and fair-minded in taking their views into account.

Group spirit and cohesiveness relate to the collective motivation of the board to work together. As the opposite of cohesiveness, alienation from other board members impedes the sharing of information around decision-making and disrupts co-operation among members. Item 38 (Item 37 in the case of the principals) related to group-spirit and cohesiveness.

Item 38	Strong Agree	ly	Agree		Disag	Disagree Strongly disagree		
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY	SECON	VDARY						
PARENT	9	32	17	61	2	7	-	-
TEACHER	10	32	17	55	3	10	1	3
TRUSTEE	27	47	27	47	3	5	-	-
PRINCIPAL	9	53	8	47	-	-	-	-
COMMUNIT	Y							
PARENT	9	31	17	59	3	10	-	-
TEACHER	5	19	17	63	5	19	-	-
TRUSTEE	24	34	43	61	3	4	1	1
PRINCIPAL	6	32	13	68	-	-	-	-

Table 7.20There is a group spirit and a sense of cohesiveness among the members of the
board.

There was a strong general consensus in the responses that there was a group spirit and a sense of cohesiveness among the members of the board. The principals on both boards agreed unanimously. The existence of a strong group spirit and cohesiveness suggests that there is a sense of corporate identity and a willingness to live with different perspectives among board members. Whether or not conflict arose often at board meetings was the focus of item 24 (Item 23 in the case of the principals).

Item 24	Agree		Disagr	ree	Strong		
	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%	
VOLUNTARY SEC	ONDARY	, .		, .			
PARENT	3	11	23	82	2	7	
TEACHER	6	19	20	63	6	19	
TRUSTEE	5	9	42	75	9	16	
PRINCIPAL	1	6	10	59	6	35	
COMMUNITY							
PARENT	2	7	24	83	3	10	
TEACHER	6	23	14	54	6	23	
TRUSTEE	3	4	51	71	18	25	
PRINCIPAL	-	-	10	52	9	48	

Table7.21Conflict arises often at our meetings.

The responses from both voluntary secondary and community nominees indicated that conflict arose infrequently at meetings. The principals concurred almost unanimously. This may be a positive or a negative indicator. Lack of conflict may indicate lack of involvement with the issues. Other factors contributing to the lack of conflict may be the relatively homogeneous background of the nominees; the relevance of the issues raised to the lay members - particularly if the professional agenda dominates; the timeframe allowed - though sufficient in the perception of the members, it may limit discussion and dissension; a board culture that may minimise or avoid conflict in the interest of harmonious relationships, or an unwillingness among members to be perceived as difficult. Malen and Ogawa (1985) found that board members had a fear of being labelled, and in the case of professional members that they might jeopardise their opportunities for advancement, so they were reluctant to raise contentious issues. This may also apply to the boards in this study given the reported levels of cohesiveness and the cordial relationships among board members. A low conflict level did not necessarily preclude open disagreement among members at board meetings as the following table indicates. Item 22 on both questionnaires invited a response to the statement that the respondents/board members rarely disagreed with other members at meetings.

Table 7.22I rarely disagree openly with other members at board meetings. [Members ofthe board rarely disagree with one another – Principal]

Item 22	Stron agree		Agree	Agree		ree	Stron disag	
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY SECC	ONDARY							
PARENT	-	-	4	14	21	75	3	11
TEACHER	2	6	6	19	17	53	7	22
TRUSTEE	-	-	19	34	28	50	9	16
PRINCIPAL	1	6	10	59	6	35	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	-	-	12	41	17	59	-	-
TEACHER	1	4	7	28	16	64	1	4
TRUSTEE	5	7	22	31	39	54	6	8
PRINCIPAL	5	26	7	39	7	39	-	-

The majority of all categories of nominee respondent indicated that they disagreed with their fellow board members at board meetings. The response from the principals did not support the nominees' perception. From the perception of the principals, board meetings were much more passive in terms of open disagreements among members than the response of the nominees indicated.

A trustee respondent stated, based on her personal experience on a number of boards, that the mix of personalities on boards can be a significant determinant of the climate on a board. In her

view, the presence of domineering or autocratic members can destroy the possibility of building a cohesive team and developing trust. There seems to be an assumption underlying the comment that the ideal board ought to quiet and agreeable.

7.2.5 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION.

The basic contention in the literature is that the effective board is well informed, has the necessary competencies to enable it to perform its role, and efficient processes in order to become properly organised. In the context of decentralisation, those to whom power is decentralised need good information and the ability to use it positively in the context of processes that are open and democratic. This section has presented the data of three key processes of the board – the agenda, decision-making, information flow – and on the culture and climate of the boards.

Setting the agenda is a key stage in the decision-making process of the board. Many of the studies referred to in chapter three indicated that the input of the principal played a major role in determining the structure and the content of the agenda (Kogan et al. 1984; Golby, 1985; Malen and Ogawa, 1988). Hanley (1989, p. 170) found that the agenda setting function was left in the hands of the principal and chairperson 96% of the time. According to the data, in the majority of cases the principal set the agenda, alone or with the chairperson. Occasionally, members did suggest agenda items for consideration, but this was not the norm. Malen and Ogawa (1985, p. 21) found that parents, in particular, were often reluctant to submit agenda items because of a fear that they might be inadequately informed, or might appear to be personalising issues, or "looking for trouble." This "…apparently restricts the willingness of some parents to place 'problems' on the agenda."

The agenda imposes an order on the work of the board through setting out what needs consideration and decision. The apparent reluctance of the nominee members to introduce items to the board through the agenda may be for reasons related to the way the boards operate, or their own confidence and sense of role. Where board meetings are held infrequently, there is a greater likelihood that the agenda will be pre-determined by the accumulation of pressing items. This may preclude serious involvement by the board in important, on-going, but less pressing aspects of school life. Effectively the agenda in this situation is predetermined and derived from the ongoing business of the meeting, or the perceptions and priorities of the board officers who set it. It may be that the way the meetings are managed allows the members to raise issues of immediate

concern without reference to the formal agenda, or in the context of a standard agenda that runs from meeting to meeting. The practice that allows the principal and/or the chairperson to determine the agenda may be grounded on the presumption that they know what is happening and what is important that needs the attention of the board. The capacity of those who set the agenda to substantially determine or control it may be limited by the way the board operates. According to Malen and Ogawa (1988), given the importance of the agenda for the work of the board, the reluctance of board members to raise issues pertinent to them enhances the potential influence of the principal and/or chairperson.

Making decisions is a complex process involving the gathering of information, identification of options, making choices, and seeing to the implementation of the decisions once they are made. Kerr (1964) and Ziegler and Jennings (1974) suggested that school boards were relatively uninvolved in their decision-making processes. They contended that the members had few opinions of their own, were dominated by the professionals, and voted to validate or "rubber stamp" decisions that were already made. Hange and Leary (1991), Keohane (1979), Harling (1984) agreed that the boards made few decisions relating to school policy and development. The data present a mixed picture of the decision-making process on the boards.

The data tend to support a picture of relative harmony on the boards. Reaching consensus was the more frequent and preferred route in decision-making. The majority of board decisions were arrived at by agreement rather than by taking a vote on both voluntary secondary and community boards. Board decisions were generally unanimous. Once taken, members of the board supported the decisions. The maintenance of harmony did not mean that difficult issues were avoided, or that the boards had, on occasion, evaded responsibility for an important issue facing the school. The difficult issues alluded to in the comments of the respondents were pupil suspensions and discipline, and difficulties with teaching staff. These are issues that point up the divergent interests of the board members since they relate specifically to particular constituencies. At the same time, there are concerns. There is evidence that the role of many board members and their boards is to confirm decisions in which they have not actively and comprehensively involved themselves. There is an implication that a substantial minority of the board members does not want a full role in the decision-making process understood in terms of full participation and active involvement. The great majority of nominees did not place issues on the agenda for meetings. They did not appear to have an alternative agenda for the board. They were interested in being informed about the school. They participated at meetings primarily through questioning and listening. A substantial minority of members did not seek information independently between meetings and depended on the board meetings for information. The lack of conflict on a board may be no more than an indication of conflict-avoidance, or that few contentious issues were addressed, or worthwhile decisions taken.

Where consensus is reported as the dominant mode of decision-making, the absence of conflict gives rise to suspicions about the depth of the consensus. It may indicate a lack of engagement with the issues raised. One way of avoiding conflict within a board is for the members to adopt patterns of thinking that are so acceptable to the group that disagreement become unthinkable or is seen as disloyalty. This can lead to an illusion of unanimity and a fear of deviating from a consensus view. Yet, the great majority of the board members generally shared enthusiasm for the concept of shared governance, and agreed that the boards had made the management of the school more democratic.

As in the agenda-setting process, the principals were key people in the decision-making process. They proposed policy and made recommendations that were often received with little questioning. Though board members agreed that they would overrule the principal, there was a dependency on him/her, not least to implement what they decided. The principal in all cases, and the chair in some cases, particularly on voluntary secondary boards, were identified as participants that exerted substantial influence during meetings. Particularly in the comments, there was an indication of a reaction from teacher nominees to what they perceived as the undue influence of the principals. In terms of influence, since the principal and/or the chairperson have substantial control of the meeting through setting the agenda, managing the meeting, and disseminating information, they have a significant level of control of the decision-making processes and the outcomes of those processes.

These conclusions, based on two simplified models of decision-making are indications of the thrust of decision-making on the boards. Board members in particular settings do not necessarily behave according to the norms of any particular model when they grapple with different values, pressures, emotions, and principles in pursuit of their objectives at both board and personal levels. Whether the decision-making processes of the board fall within a consensus model of operating needs further and deeper investigation than was possible in the current study. This study indicates that, in the view of the board members, it does.

Being a board member is more than mere attendance at meetings, listening, questioning, and the offering of opinions on issues that arise. There is an attendant responsibility for the long-term welfare of the school and those it serves, which at least requires from decision-makers that they are adequately informed and objective about the school they are managing, and the possible implications of their decisions (Baron and Howell, 1974; Taylor, 1977; Wohlstetter, 1993). Good decisions arrived at collaboratively need good information. Boards need information to make informed decisions about issues relating to student performance, staff needs, parent satisfaction, curriculum, school resources, their statutory obligations, and their obligations under their seed documents.

Good communications and information flow are indicators of the overall effectiveness of the board. Boards, for example, need to know whether their decisions are producing results, so they need to be provided with information so that they can continue to make informed decisions. Comparing the categories of board member, parent nominees on the boards were most likely to agree that there were aspects of the school that they were uncomfortable enquiring about, trustee nominees least likely to feel uncomfortable. A small majority of parent nominees on community boards indicated that others on the board seemed to have information that they lacked. A substantial minority of parent nominees on both boards, teacher nominees on voluntary secondary boards, and trustee nominees on both types of board did not take the initiative in seeking information outside the board meeting. The majority of each category of nominee respondent on both boards indicated that they had sufficient understanding of the technical information needed to manage the school. A large minority of the voluntary secondary principals disagreed, and in so doing indicated a lack of confidence in the ability of their boards to be effective managers of their schools.

Potentially, the board of management is subject to a constant flow of information and influences from many directions. The traditional flow of information in schools has been hierarchical from the Department of Education and Science to the school, or from the school office to the staff, and outwards to parents. The data suggested that this pattern still applied on many boards, though board members indicated that they also contributed information about the school, a substantial minority of board members were comfortable seeking information about the school, a substantial minority of the parent and trustee nominees did not actively seek information. The general picture suggests that the majority of board members are satisfied that the information they need about the school is available to them, and that they are sufficiently informed for their role.

Information flow and communication happens in the context of contact and interaction between the board and its external environment, and within the board among the members. Ideally, the boundaries of the board are permeable. Bacharach and Mundell (1993, p. 446-447) stated that organisational politics is a power game in which "external interest groups in the environment influence the organisation, and interest groups in the organisation use interest groups in the environment to negotiate and enact their logics of action." In this view, there ought to be a high level of interactivity between the organisation and its environment. Just over half of all the nominee respondents indicated that there was regular formal contact between the board and the nominating groups. Less than a third of all the principals agreed that this was the case. These, and other findings relating to board orientation and responsiveness discussed in chapter six, suggest that many boards function as relatively closed and isolated institutions. Where boards or councils are isolated, the nominators, as particular interest groups, have limited information concerning the activities of many boards, and little opportunity to influence board activities. According to Ziegler and Tucker (1977), such boards also experience lower levels of conflict and controversy because they are shielded from difficult issues and realities.

Kogan et al. (1984) distinguished between the "episodic governing body" and the "continuous governing body", the former being more dependent on the principal as a source of information. There are indications in the data suggesting that sharing information is the most important part of the board meeting. This echoes a finding of Kogan et al. (1984) that lay governors did not see their role in terms of policy and as agents of change, but in terms of being supportive of the school. In Kogan's terms, while accountability was a focus, the boards were using information provided by the school to evaluate the school. This meant that in the absence of independent sources of information and agenda issues, the professionals as the information providers were setting the focus for the board. Kogan's informants saw the existence of a forum that required even this level of accountability from the professionals as an important in itself. Through providing this service, boards could have influence on the day-to-day operations of the school.

From the perspective of the majority of the board members, the current information processes on their boards were sufficient for their needs. Information sharing is an important part of the business of a meeting, but the meeting is the forum where decisions are made. That is their primary function. Meetings can change from being information-focused to decision-focused, from being information processing sessions to being sessions that use information effectively, if it is not necessary to use them to convey information. Given their need for independent and relevant information, boards need to assess their information processes on an on-going basis in their own interests and in the interests of the information providers. Along with information flow, the climate of board meetings is an important contributor to open and participative processes on the board.

In the view of Malen, Ogawa and Kranz (1990), many boards operate on the basis of unwritten rules of behaviour that are not immediately obvious to new members, and that take time to understand. The form that participation will take on a particular board relates also to such factors as received practices, traditions, attitudes, values, experiences, personal relationships among others. These add up to a culture on boards that either supports or inhibits participation. On boards, as implied by Bacon's (1978) study, and supported by Mungovan (1994), the culture can become so deeply embedded that board members may not be aware that there are alternative ways of operating. Climate is a factor of values and attitudes that reflect how board members feel about themselves and the board. The discussion in chapter three, section two on models of board operations suggested a continuum of operating cultures and climates on boards. This continuum ran from boards that were generally passive, accepting of, and deferring to the administration, which they believed had to be supported rather than to be held accountable, to boards where participation was encouraged, and where the board challenged itself and its administration. What boards do may relate as much to their culture and their climate as to their processes.

Many factors serve to determine the climate on a board - the quality of interpersonal relationships, the dominant cultural norms and received practices, board structures and modes of operation, and factors related to role understanding, and accountability requirements. The general picture across both types of boards was one of boards on which there was a good group spirit, openness and trust, and a sense of cohesiveness among members. This appeared to translate into generally conflict free meetings, where there was a willingness among members to compromise on issues, and where decisions were reached by agreement more than by majority vote. Board decisions were generally unanimous among members operating out of a nominee more than a representative stance. While the general majority finding supported the view that the boards were operating in a non-conflictual manner through a "sacred/elite" form of operation, this was not the universal experience.

There was little evidence of serious conflict related to issues on the boards, though members did indicate that there were disagreements. Though conflict did not arise often at board meetings, this did not preclude members disagreeing with one another, and this occurred in the view of a large majority of respondents. Disagreement occurred in an environment of positive relationships between board members and a culture that was, in the view of the respondents, cohesive, and informed by trust and openness. Open disagreement between members was less likely on community boards than on voluntary secondary boards. There was little evidence of role conflict, though there was a degree of disillusionment among voluntary secondary principals with their boards. While the general view across all categories of nominee suggested that the boards were cohesive, teachers were less likely than other categories to agree.

Teacher nominees were less likely than any other group to accept that the boards were free of conflict or that the meetings were held in an atmosphere of openness and trust. As the group with most contact with their constituencies, and the most likely to act in a representative capacity, the teacher nominees were more likely to reflect the culture and issues of their nominators at board meetings. The board, the school itself, the stakeholder interests, and the wider community have their characteristic climates and cultures. Nominees bring the cultures and values of the constituents to the board. Teacher nominees bring their particular culture. Specific board cultures may not welcome the articulation of this cultural diversity at board meetings, or accommodate it. If they did, they might be less likely to operate according to a "sacred-elite" style." The more open a board is to its environment and to the issues of its members, the more active and controversial it is likely to be in its deliberations and actions, and the more open it is likely to be in its general culture and climate.

In a number of comments, respondents indicated improvements that, in their view, would help the climate on boards – among them more frequent meetings at more appropriate times, location, and a cup of tea! It is within the power of the board to redefine its culture, but in order to do this it needs a reason. In the evolving climate of boards set out in chapter two, many factors are changing the external environment of boards. Inevitably, these will change their internal environments also. Zeigler (1974) posited that the most powerful way of changing a board's culture was to challenge the professional dominance of the boards through making them more representational, accountable, and accessible. His thesis formed a significant part of the debate on school governance for many years in the United States. One lesson that emerged from the debate was that when issues of real concern to board members and their constituencies were raised, the professional and administrative

control of the boards and the harmony on them proved very tentative. This message is echoed by Munn (1990) referring to Scottish boards, and by Gamage (1992) referring to Australian boards.

Many interwoven and continuous processes are at work on boards. Culture informs and helps define perceived reality. It may subtly, but firmly, determine what can and cannot happen, be said or not said at board meetings. This study has not gone beyond the immediate perceptions of the board members of what is happening on their boards. The data suggest at one level that all is very positive, but some of the responses and comments from the nominees and principals suggest that there is an underlying set of tensions that need to be articulated and addressed on many of the boards. Further study of this aspect of the boards will yield deeper insights into the reality of board operations.

Culture is a factor of relationships formed in the context of shared purposes and experiences. Power is also relational and is exercised in the context of particular cultures. Each board member participates actively or passively in determining the patterns of authority and the exercise of power within the board. Each one is responsible for the board and the exercise of power and authority within it. The exercise of power and authority within a partnership relationship ought to be focused on the purpose of the board rather than on the nominee in whom the representative authority is vested. The following section will set out the data and discuss a particular set of relationships within board of management – the relationships between the lay and professional members.

7.3 RELATIONSHIPS – PROFESSIONAL/LAY

As set out in the review of the literature in chapter four, the relationships between lay and professional members on the board are key determinants in board effectiveness. The literature refers to two sets of relationships in particular – those between the principal and the board, and between the professionals, understood as the principal and teacher nominees, and the laity, understood as parent and trustee nominees. It also refers to the relationship between principals and teacher nominees on boards. In the context of partnership on boards a number of themes emerge as important. Among these is the access allowed to lay and professional board members to promote their interests, the ability of the board to relate to the school principal, and his/her role in relating to the board and the school in a coherent and independent manner. There is a strong, but not unanimous, view that the professionals and their agenda control the board agenda and processes.

The board works as a group, so nurturing and developing the board as a group, and fostering a sense of trust and cohesiveness in its working relationships is an important task for the effective board. Do board members feel that there is a positive working relationship between the professionals (principal and teachers) and the laity (trustee and parent nominees) on the board? This general issue was addressed in a number of questionnaire items. Does board business reflect more closely the needs of the professional staff of the school than the needs of parents (Item 34)? In terms of contributions at board meetings, which group speaks most – parents, trustees, teachers or all equally (Item 73)? Is the professional expertise of teachers respected by the board (Item 37)? Are some members uncomfortable enquiring about aspects of the school (Item 54)? The influence of the administration on policy is queried in items 9 and 17. Do board members perceive dependence on the part of the board on the administration to develop policies for it (Item 9)? Are there issues being dealt with by the school administration alone about which the board should be consulted, at least (Item 17)? Does the board accept recommendations from the principal with little questioning by the members (Item 47)? Would the board be prepared to overrule the Principal if an issue arose on which they held opposing views to him/her (Item 10)?

Item 34 invited respondents to indicate the thrust of board business – whether it reflected the needs of the professional staff or of parents.

Item 34	Strongly agree	y	Agree		Disagr		Strong disagre	
	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
SECONDARY	N = 117)							
PARENT	4	14	14	50	8	29	2	7
TEACHER	-	-	14	44	17	53	1	3
TRUSTEE	1	2	18	32	34	60	4	7
PRINCIPAL	4	24	4	24	8	47	1	6
COMMUNIT	Y(N=126))						
PARENT	2	7	13	45	12	41	2	7
TEACHER	2	7	7	26	17	63	1	4
TRUSTEE	4	6	16	23	39	56	11	16
PRINCIPAL	-	-	14	74	5	26	-	-

Table 7.23Board business reflects more closely the needs of the professional staff of the
school than the needs of parents.

The majority of parents indicated that the business of the board reflected the needs of the professionals more than of the parents. The majority of teacher and trustee nominees on both

boards held the contrary view. If the needs of parents were uppermost in the business of the boards, it would be likely that they would be substantial contributors to board debate and providers of information. The data indicate that they were not. The majority of the community principals and minority of the voluntary secondary principals agreed that professional issues got preference.

Item 54 invited respondents to indicate if they were uncomfortable enquiring about aspects of the school that they would like to know about in their capacity as a board member. In the case of the principals, item 53 enquired if some board members appeared reticent in enquiring about the school. The response is set out in detail in Table 7.13 in section 7.2.3 (p. 300) above. This summary table indicates only the level of agreement there was with the statement.

Table 7.24 There are aspects of the school I would like to know about as a board member, but I do not feel comfortable enquiring about them.[Some board members appear reticent in enquiring about the school - Principal]

Item 54	Parent		Teac	Teach.		Trustee		cipal
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
SECONDARY	9	34	4	13	11	20	4	23
COMMUNITY	12	41	8	29	12	17	5	29

The response indicated that the majority of respondents were comfortable seeking information about aspects of the school. There was an element of unease among parent nominees, more so on community than on voluntary secondary boards. Trustee nominees indicated least discomfort. What these aspects were was not queried in the questionnaires. Much of the information about the school is most readily available from the principal and the professional staff. The response to both items 34 (Table 7.23) and 54 (Table 7.24) indicate an element of exclusion in the relationship between the professionals and parents. From the perspective of the majority of the parent nominees, the business of the board reflected the needs of professionals primarily. From the perspective of a substantial minority of the parents, they were uncomfortable seeking information.

Item 37 (Item 36 in the case of the principals) queried whether the board respected the professional expertise of teachers.

Item 37	Strong	gly	Agree	Agree		gree	Stron disag	- ·
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY SECC	ONDARY							
PARENT	6	21	21	75	1	4	-	-
TEACHER	7	22	22	69	3	9	-	-
TRUSTEE	19	33	37	65	1	2	-	-
PRINCIPAL	9	53	8	47	-	-	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	5	17	24	83	-	-	-	-
TEACHER	7	26	20	74	-		-	-
TRUSTEE	21	29	48	67	2	3	1	1
PRINCIPAL	4	21	15	79	-	-	-	-

Table 7.25The professional expertise of teachers is respected by the board.

There was almost unanimous agreement from the nominees on both boards that the board respected the professional expertise of teachers, and unanimous agreement from the both groups of principals. The quality of the relationship between professional and lay members of the board as perceived by the members was also the focus of item 65.

Item 65	Strong agree	gly	Agree	•	Disag	gree	Stron disag	
	N	%	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
VOLUNTARY SEC	CONDARY	Y						
PARENT	9	33	16	59	2	7	-	-
TEACHER	11	34	19	59	1	3	1	3
TRUSTEE	21	37	33	58	3	5	-	-
PRINCIPAL	10	59	7	41	-	-	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	7	25	19	68	1	4	1	4
TEACHER	5	19	21	78	1	4	-	-
TRUSTEE	32	45	37	52	1	1	1	1
PRINCIPAL	6	32	13	68	-	-	-	-

Table 7.26 There is a positive working relationship between the professionals (principal and teachers) and the laity (trustee and parent nominees) on the board.

Despite the element of parental exclusion noted in the board/parent relationship in the response to item 54 (Table 7.24 above), there was almost unanimous agreement among both nominees and principals that there was a positive working relationship between the professionals and the laity on the board. Did this positive working relationship mean that all members felt that they had an

opportunity to express their views at meetings? This was the subject of item 59 (Item 58 in the case of the principals).

Item 59	Strong	gly	Agree	;	Disag	gree	Stron disag	
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY SECC	ONDARY							
PARENT	11	41	14	52	1	4	1	4
TEACHER	13	41	16	50	2	6	1	3
TRUSTEE	27	47	30	53	-	-	-	-
PRINCIPAL	8	47	9	53	-	-	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	8	29	18	64	2	7	-	-
TEACHER	12	44	15	56	-	-	-	-
TRUSTEE	34	48	37	52	-	-	-	-
PRINCIPAL	12	47	7	53	-	-	-	

Table 7.27 I feel that I have an opportunity to express my view at meetings.

The response indicated a strong level of agreement that all categories of respondent – professional and lay - felt that they had an opportunity to express their views at meetings.

Writing in the context of parental participation and influence in the school situation, Macbeth (1993) demonstrated that parental participation did not necessarily mean that the professionals were willing to be open to parental influence. Item 60 enquired if board members felt that their views were taken into account in board decision-making.

Item 60	Strong agree	gly	Agree		Disag	gree	Stron disag	
	N	%	N	%	Ν	%	N	%
VOL.SEC.(N=116)								
PARENT	8	30	15	56	3	11	1	3
TEACHER	11	34	18	56	3	9	-	-
TRUSTEE	23	40	32	56	2	4	-	-
PRINCIPAL	10	59	7	41	-	-	-	-
COMMUNITY(N=126)								
PARENT	7	25	18	64	2	7	1	4
TEACHER	6	22	21	78	-	-	-	-
TRUSTEE	26	37	45	63	-	-	-	-
PRINCIPAL	12	63	7	37	-	-	-	-

Table 7.28 I feel that the board takes my views into account in arriving at its decisions.

The teacher nominees on community boards agreed unanimously that their views were taken into account. Their counterparts on the voluntary secondary boards were also very positive. The principals from both boards were unanimous that their views were taken into account. Trustee nominees on both boards agreed almost unanimously. A large majority of the parent nominees also agreed. The responses to items 59 and 60 suggested that the great majority of professional and lay had access to the board, and that that access had a positive outcome in that their views were taken into account by the board in its decision-making.

The board is the forum where board members speak. Table 7.4 set out above in section one, and repeated here, sets out the response to item 73 as an indicator of professional/lay relationships on the boards. Item 73 (Item 66 in the case of the principals) invited respondents to indicate, from their personal perspective, which of the nominee groups spoke most at meetings, or whether all spoke equally.

Table 7.29 From your perspective, with regard to meetings, which of the following groups speak most: a) parents; b) teachers; c) trustees; d) all equally.

Item 73	PAREN	NTS	TEAC	HERS	TRUST	TEES	ALL EQUA	LLY
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY SECONDARY	0	0	9	9	20	20	70	70
COMMUNITY	0	0	6	5	24	21	87	74
PRINCIPALS VOL.SEC.	1	6	8	47	7	41	1	6
PRINCIPALS COMM.	2	11	12	66	4	22	-	-

The great majority of the nominees on both boards indicated that all members spoke equally. The principals indicated that trustee and teacher nominees spoke most. Teacher or trustee nominees did not identify parent nominees as a group that contributed most to meetings. Neither did the parent nominees themselves. While the thrust in the response was that all contributed equally, the contributions of parent nominees were not as visible, or were not noted as much as the contributions of other groups. This outcome suggests a trustee/professional dominance of the proceedings, or an inability on the part of the parents to make themselves heard. Item 64 on both questionnaires invited a response to the statement that all members became actively involved in board discussions.

Item 64		Strongly Agree		Agree		gree	Strongly. disagree	
	Ν	%	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
VOLUNTARY SE	CONDARY	(N=116)						
PARENT	9	33	15	56	2	7	1	4
TEACHER	10	31	12	38	9	28	1	3
TRUSTEE	24	42	27	47	6	11	-	-
PRINCIPAL	9	53	8	47	-	-	-	-
COMMUNITY(12	28)							
PARENT	5	17	21	72	3	10	-	-
TEACHER	4	15	16	59	6	22	1	4
TRUSTEE	26	36	40	56	6	8	-	-
PRINCIPAL	4	21	15	79	-	-	-	-

Table 7.30All board members become actively involved in board discussions.

In the light of the response to item 73, a strong level of agreement with the statement might be expected. There was a high level of agreement across all categories of respondent that all members became actively involved in board discussions. There was unanimous agreement among the principals that all members became involved in board discussions.

In the context of the professional/lay relationship on the board, the relationship between the board and the principal is accepted as important. Much of the general literature on the board/principal relationship focuses on the balance of powers between boards perceived to be meddlesome and intrusive on the one hand, and principals perceived to be too powerful on the other. While administrators may appear to wield a strong influence, and may even be dominant players in the board/administration relationship, the boards still retained ultimate power, the initiative to act, and the right to call the administration to account. Item 10 (Item 9 in the case of the principals) queried whether boards would be prepared to overrule the principal if an issue arose on which they held an opposing view.

Item 10	Strong agree	gly	Agree		Disag	ree	Stron disag	
	N	%	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
VOL. SEC. (N=114)								
PARENT	1	4	21	78	4	15	1	4
TEACHER	4	13	19	59	8	25	1	3
TRUSTEE	10	18	37	67	8	15	-	-
PRINCIPAL	-	-	5	29	10	59	2	12
COMMUNITY(N=123)								
PARENT	2	7	25	86	-	-	2	7
TEACHER	5	19	12	46	9	35	-	-
TRUSTEE	18	27	36	53	13	19	1	2
PRINCIPAL	1	5	12	63	3	16	3	16

Table 7.31 Our board would be prepared to overrule the principal if an issue arose on which on which we had an opposing view to him/her. [Our board would be willing to overrule the principal on an issue – Principal]

While principals may enjoy considerable practical control, boards have legal control. A large majority among the nominees indicated that boards would overrule the principal in a situation where they held an opposing view. The professionals on the board were less likely than the laity to agree that the principal would be overruled. Community principals were more likely to agree that their boards would be willing to overrule the principal than were the voluntary secondary principals - 68% in the case of community principals and 29% in the case of voluntary secondary principals. The response suggests that some principals, particularly on the voluntary secondary boards, do not appreciate the limits of their role. Boards in other jurisdictions are coming to a greater appreciation of their role and its authority. They are joining the management world of consensus seeking and power sharing, and in this context the healthiest boards are those that are alive, assertive, and in touch. They are rejecting a model of management that gives pre-eminence to any party in their decision-making. In indicating that they would overrule the principal, the nominees are rejecting such a model.

Confusion between the areas of interest of the board and the school administration can create difficulties for boards and administrators alike if disagreements arise over their respective rights and obligations. Item 17 queried whether there were issues being dealt with by the school administration alone about which the board should be consulted, at least. Item 16 of the questionnaire for principals queried if there were issues being dealt with by the school administration alone that should be dealt with by the board.

Item 17	Strong	gly Agree	Agree		Disagr	ree	Strong	ly. disagree
	N	%	Ν	%	N	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY S	SECOND	ARY(N=11	6)					
PARENT	4	15	3	11	15	57	5	18
TEACHER	7	22	3	10	16	52	5	16
TRUSTEE	3	5	7	13	29	54	15	29
PRINCIPAL	3	18	6	35	5	29	3	18
COMMUNITY	(N=128)							
PARENT	3	11	2	7	21	78	1	4
TEACHER	2	8	2	8	16	61	6	23
TRUSTEE	1	14	6	8	47	65	18	25
PRINCIPAL	-		4	21	13	68	2	11

Table 7.32 There are issues being dealt with now by the school administration alone about which the board should be consulted, at least. [There are issues being dealt with now by the school administration alone which should be dealt with by the board – Principal].

From the perspective of the nominees, a substantial majority disagreed that the principals alone were dealing with issues about which the board should be consulted. In the case of the principals, a small majority of voluntary secondary principals agreed that there were issues being dealt with by the school administration alone that should be dealt with by the board, while just over a fifth of the community principals agreed that this was the case. The response of the voluntary principals suggests that there is a degree of tension between themselves and their boards, and expectations they have of their boards that are not being met. This tension is obvious in many comments from the respondents.

The responses to the questionnaire items suggest that there is a degree of tension in the lay/professional relationship on the boards. Comments made by members underline that there is tension, if not frustration, being experienced on both sides of the professional/lay relationship. This was most pronounced in the case of the voluntary secondary principals. In the opinion of one voluntary secondary principal, the board makes little difference to the running of the school. At worst "it can make life hell for the principal if the people on it are troublemakers." Another stated that, in his experience, board members were "well meaning amateurs," to whom he brought items for consideration and for approval, and for whom his role "seems to be education training officer." Another commented on the lack of "availability" of the board for planning, and for assistance in dealing with the Department of Education and Science. Another wanted the board to be more proactive than reactive, and to carry out their decisions themselves rather than having the principal do all the work. In the opinion of another, the board needed to involve itself in defining policies, and to take responsibility for trustee issues such as refurbishment.

Another commented that the board was a "talking shop" and rather remote, and asked if the board could actually "do some work," or if that was their role? The principal did "most/all of the management work." Another principal commented that Boards should be exposed to ongoing development on the ground. Against these critical comments from voluntary secondary principals, there was only one positive comment to the effect that the board members were good people and very supportive, "but with their own jobs", a comment which suggested that while they were supportive, there was much more they could do. The principal went on to state that their role was to act as a legal rubber stamp. An excessive amount of work remained with the principal.

The comments from the community principals were less critical. In the view of one community principal, it would be difficult for board members as unpaid participants to be more involved than they were. As a voluntary group, in the view of another principal, it would be difficult to see the board being able to give a greater time commitment. Another commented that his/her board was already effective, so he/she did not see how it could be made more effective. For another principal, the lack of availability of board members for more regular meetings was causing problems. Another commented that he was blessed with a very supportive board to whom he referred most situations. Another commented that in his/her experience most board nominees had been exceptionally interested, committed, and endowed with the necessary vocal, educational, and "common-sense" qualities. If the situation had been otherwise, the experience would have been less happy. Another commented that he/she was very happy with the structure, and that in his/her experience it was capable of dealing with awkward individuals who emerge from time to time with tact and dignity. Apathy was a problem for another principal who stated that boards needed to be aware of their legal obligations, and not just satisfied that the school operated satisfactorily. While there were obvious negative comments from the principals, these related mainly to the workload, particularly that associated with their role as unremunerated secretaries to the boards. One principal asked for greater input from nominees into the agenda and not to leave it all to him/her. Another wanted the board to be more reflective in developing school policies, while another wanted more regular discussions on educational issues and policies at board meetings, and another wanted more power for the board to deal with unsatisfactory teachers. One wanted board members to serve on selection boards as a way of giving them an insight into the quality of their staff. Another, suggesting that there was a distance between the board and the school, wished to see board members taking a greater part in school activities.

What about the perspective among board members of the principals? A voluntary secondary teacher nominee wanted the principal to provide more information about the day-to-day operations of the school, and to be put under pressure for greater accountability and efficiency in managing the school, and in relating to the board. Another complained that board decisions were not being implemented, and were being raised again at subsequent meetings. Two teacher nominees commented that the relationship between the principal and the chair was too close. In the view of one, the chairperson was too involved in the day-to-day operations of the school. At board meetings, issues were not being opened up as they should. In the view of the other, the chairperson and principal together dominated the board. They treated the board as a stamp for decisions already made. One parent nominee commented that there was too much agreement between chairperson and principal, that opinions were not welcome - as was obvious from the attitude of the chairperson, and that there was too much talk about religious ethos. The in-board induction was "incestuous," and the traditions maintained by a long serving principal were too dominant. Another parent who contended that parents were outside the "pale", and that the chairperson had too much control, echoed the view. Another commented that the board was the most frustrating group he/she had ever been involved with, and that the impression given by the administration was that it was tolerated rather than allowed to lead. Two parent nominees expressed general satisfaction. They were proud of the work of the principal and staff. There were few comments on the relationship by trustee nominees. In the view of one trustee nominee, the board made the principal's life much easier through reducing his/her workload. Another commented that they had an excellent principal and a forward looking staff, working in a happy and friendly school environment. Another commented that chairpersons took on a heavy workload - "self-inflicted."

In the case of the community boards, the role of the chairperson got less mention in the comments. All the teacher nominees who commented referred to the influence of the principal. One teacher nominee commented that at the beginning of a board session, the principal and chairperson were more familiar with the workings of the board and this gave them an advantage over new members. New members were at a disadvantage, as it took time for them to become familiar with the board business, especially if meetings were irregular. Another commented that the running of the board was highly dependent on the personality of the principal. He/she "set the tone and limits for the board meetings." In this person's view, the role of the principal was the most important factor in the operation of the board. Another commented that the board

could only be as effective as the principal "allowed it to be." In the view of another teacher nominee, the principal had too much influence. He/she tried "to railroad matters through at all costs.' There were two comments from parent nominees. In the view of one parent nominee, the principal played the leading role most of the time, raising issues, and guiding the line of thought. The board respected the principal, supported him/her on all issues because they felt he/she knew best about the running of the school, and the board was passive. This nominee also commented that for some parents, the board appeared to be more friendly to the issues of the principal than to parent issues, and instanced pupil suspensions as an example where this was Another called for a professional manager with management skills to manage the the case. school, rather than a person with teaching skills. One trustee nominee commented that they had an excellent chairperson, and a principal who really had the interests of the school at heart. Another commented that the boards should be made more accountable for their role as managers, and not just allowed to pass everything on to the principal. In the view of another, the principal was professional and positive and "used the board well." Another commented that boards depended on principals more than principals depended on the boards. A good principal made all the difference. Another commented that the principal dominated everything and that there was too much agreement on the board.

The thrust of the responses to the questionnaires indicated a strong positive attitude and goodwill towards the boards. The comments suggest that underneath the veil of cordiality indicated in the data relating to the climate of the board meetings, there are problems and issues that need to be addressed in an open and frank manner. To do this, boards may need preparation and the help of external facilitation.

7.3.1 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the focus was on the forms and the quality of the relationships between board members within the board, and particularly the lay-professional relationship. This relationship is indicative of the level of partnership and collaboration on boards. The data suggested that neither lay nor professional groups were dominant on the boards. Almost all respondents indicated that they felt that they had an opportunity to express their views at meetings. There was a strong consensus among all the respondents that the board was able to address the issues that concerned them as members- a response that could indicate that issues of concern to both laity and professionals were being addressed. The frequency of contributions made by

members to board discussions is taken as indicator of participation. The majority perception was that all groups contributed equally, though parent nominees were not identified as a group that contributed most to meetings by either teacher or parent nominees. Almost all respondents indicated that they felt that they had an opportunity to express their views at meetings. There was almost unanimous agreement from the nominees on both boards that the board respected the professional expertise of teachers, and unanimous agreement from the both groups of principals. The majority of all nominee categories indicated that their boards would overrule their principals if they held an opposing view. The majority of the voluntary secondary principals disagreed that their board would overrule them. The teacher nominees and the principals were more likely than parent and trustee nominees to disagree with the overall picture. As the comments of the principals and nominee members show, underlying this general picture of relative harmony, there are, in the perception of some members, substantial issues that need to be addressed, particularly in the board/principal relationship.

In the comments, the voluntary secondary principals indicated a substantial level of dissatisfaction with their boards. The comments of the community principals indicated substantial satisfaction. A number of factors may account for this situation. In the community board, the role of the chairperson is less defined. This results in a more independent role for the principal and a greater sense of freedom and autonomy in the role, potentially leading to a greater sense of job satisfaction. Many of the community principals appointed to newly developing schools may have felt less constrained by tradition, and freer in determining their role, than the voluntary secondary principals, the majority of whom were continuing in a predetermined tradition. On both voluntary secondary and community boards, the teacher nominees more than parent or trustee nominees tended to be critical of their principals.

The professional/lay divide is of an immediate relevance for principals in dealing with a lay board, particularly in determining where the role of the board ends and that of the principal begins. There are suggestions in the literature that the principal, though a support to the board, effectively controls its operations, thereby limiting its power and influence (Pascal, 1986; Maden, 1993; Canniffe, 1993). Both in the literature and in the data, there is a general acceptance of the importance of the role of principal as a mentor, and as a support for the successful implementation of the board of management concept. In both, the role of the principal emerges as one of significant influence. The data indicated a level of dependence by the boards on the principals in the area of policy, but it was not a case of recommendations by principals being accepted

uncritically. Principals also had a strong influence on the development of the board agenda. Boards could assert their independence by overruling the principal, and the majority of board members indicated that they were willing to do that when they held an opposing view. Though the board did not accept policies or other recommendations from the principals uncritically, these recommendations were likely to be important markers for its deliberations. In a context where relatively few board members presented items for board agendas, they had the capacity to determine board operations significantly.

While there is a substantial literature relating to the role of the principal that stresses the need for trust and confidence in the board/principal relationship, the role of the chairperson is not as widely discussed. Where it is discussed (Kogan et al, 1984), the role of the chairperson as first among equals on the board is identified as having a major influence on the board's leadership function. In most cases, though not exclusively, he/she is a layperson. The chairperson has an important role in nurturing and developing the lay/professional relationship. The role is not addressed directly in this study. Voluntary secondary nominees from seven different boards raised it in eight comments. Two comments were positive. Six were critical and alleged lack of independence, lack of knowledge, or inappropriate control of the board by the chair. Community nominees raised it in four comments – three related to the importance of the role and the need for training for it, and one wished to see it rotate among the membership.

In the literature, the curriculum appears as an area of particular contention in the professional/lay relationship on boards. The data for this study suggest that boards did not play a significant role in the formulation and detailed discussion of the curriculum, either of its organisation, or of the approaches to its delivery in the schools. Given their influence in setting the agenda, it might be asked why the chairpersons and principals did not ensure that educational issues were raised with greater regularity at board meetings. Given the level of access teacher nominees had to the board, the respect accorded to their views, and the place accorded to professional issues on the agenda, it might be asked why the teacher nominees did not ensure that curriculum issues were raised. The literature supports the view that the professionals were reluctant to raise curriculum issues at board meetings and wished to keep them within the control of the professionals. The literature suggests that educational professionals, for a multitude of reasons, are reluctant to share curriculum issues with the laity. Dixon (1992, p.15) stated that the barrier to greater parent involvement at board level is not "parent apathy but lack of support from educators." Schaeffer and Betz (1992) found that parental involvement in budgeting, staffing and curriculum was

limited and generally not desired by school personnel or parents. According to Marchesani (1993, p. 58), some parents "actually felt that their children might be singled out or treated unfairly... by teachers who deemed parents to be interfering." It may be that the professionals as a dominant group on the board see it as against their interests to raise curriculum issues, or that the boards through their own passivity effectively exclude themselves from the discussion. In the case study (Mungovan, 1994) the professionals indicated willingness to address curriculum issues. The passivity of board members may be due to the lack of understanding of the role of the board, and the lack of effective training and support. Based on an extensive study, McCollum (1996) argued that the while the reform of school governance needed clear goals from the outset, it also needed several years for planning, and for its progressive implementation. It takes time for a board to come to a full appreciation of its responsibility and powers. Both the professional and lay members on the board, each group for its own reasons, are responsible for the apparent lack of attention paid to educational issues.

Theoretically, the professional/lay relationship may appear to be straightforward, but in practice it is less so. At one level, the question asked is where the locus of power resides on boards - with the professionals or with the boards? The underlying relationship on the boards between lay and professional members, and between the boards and their principals is in accord with a board culture that accepts a key role, but not dominance, for the professionals in the context of the overall role of the board. The data suggest that the professional views of teachers are respected, and that the principals enjoy a substantial level of influence in the area of policy. Their influence as initiators of policy suggested that the principals were taking the lead and were potentially the primary innovators on the boards. An underlying tension is the relationship between the professional autonomy of the teacher and the demands of accountability understood in the measured terms of the marketplace. In these relationships and tensions, there may be a vying for power between the different parties as each party seeks to promote its particular interests. If the focus goes onto power within the professional/lay relationship, and who has it, as it may do in the context of a national debate in which particular interests or representative groups aggressively promote their particular agendas, partnership between the interests and participative leadership at the level of the school will suffer.

The response to item 20 set out in chapter six, section 1.3 (Table 6.5) reported a view among teacher and trustee nominees that in the appointment of board members there ought to be a strong value placed on competencies and expertise in areas related to education. The literature

suggests that members from such a background tend to be more supportive of a professional agenda on boards, and a "sacred" orientation in board operations favouring by closed decisionmaking styles, "expert" opinion, and consensus along professional lines (Bailey, 1965; Becker, 1970; Iannacone and Lutz, 1970). The response indicated that from the perspective of many of their members, boards ought to be "expert" groups. By implication, they ought to be more professionally oriented in their ethos than lay oriented. Parent nominees did not agree.

The underlying relationship on the boards between lay and professional members and between the boards and their principals does not appear to be one of perceived influence of one over the other. Yet, the data indicate that the professionals exercise a substantial influence role. There was an acceptance of a key role for the professionals that was accepted by the boards, and that might be construed as undue influence. The principals enjoyed a substantial level of influence in the area of policy. On community boards, the relationships between the boards and their principals appeared to be, in general, harmonious and supportive. There were higher levels of tension in the relationship on voluntary secondary boards. The voluntary secondary boards were in general younger than community boards. The shorter experience of the boards as well as the structures (e.g. the role of the chairperson) within which they operated in voluntary secondary schools may explain some of the tensions. The induction, training, and ongoing support may also be factors. The induction and training ought to be positive and liberating, and ought to provide a challenge to the new board.

7.4 SUPPORT AND TRAINING

There is a substantial and diverse literature dealing with the training and development needs of boards in all the jurisdictions referred to in chapter two. This literature ranges across advice columns in the educational supplements of the national media, programmes provided by national professional associations and commercial bodies, articles in professional journals, dissertation research, and larger scale studies. Training and support for board members in Ireland is provided by bodies such as the Council of Managers of Catholic Secondary Schools, the Joint Managerial Body, the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools, the teacher unions through their in-house programmes, the parent associations, and various publications, and newsletters – usually confidential to memberships. The education departments of the universities and other trainers working in-house, or by way of local seminars or programmes, also provide training.

Uncertainty regarding the role of the board at any level is a barrier to the board in exercising a leadership role. The tables set out in chapter six, section 6.2, relating to role understanding suggest that while there is a positive perception among board members in general regarding the role of the boards, there are uncertainties. These uncertainties may be a factor of the quality of the induction processes used by boards, or the lack of them, as well as board information and communications systems. Despite the extent of their background experience set out in chapter six, section 1.3, many board members may have had little substantive exposure to the work of the schools they manage, or may be relying on perceptions based on anecdotal or limited personal experiences. Often, new members will join the board with little experience of any strategic role such as will be required of them as board members. They will need training.

How do board members perceive their preparation for their role? As boards are appointed by their trustees, it seems reasonable to expect that trustees ensure that they are given an introduction to the work of the board and are briefed on their role and responsibilities (Items 67 and 52). It seems reasonable to expect that they are briefed on all aspects of the school for which they are responsible (Items 54, 56). They need more than informal discussions and observation of how things are done (Item 66). They need to have a sufficient understanding of the technical information needed to manage the school (Item 68), consult their terms of reference (Deed of Trust, Articles of Management), and, in general, to feel adequately prepared for their role as board members (Item 71).

Were new board members given an introduction to the work of the board? A response to this was invited from nominees in item 67 of their questionnaire.

Item 67	Strong agree	gly	Agree		Disag	Disagree		gly ree
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%
VOLUNTARY SEC	CONDARI	7						
PARENT	4	15	19	70	3	11	1	4
TEACHER	6	19	21	66	5	16	-	-
TRUSTEE	22	39	33	58	2	4	-	-
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	3	10	18	62	7	24	1	3
TEACHER	8	30	14	52	5	19	-	-
TRUSTEE	16	23	35	49	15	21	5	7

Table 7.33As a new member, I was given an introduction to the work of the board.

A substantial majority across all categories of nominee respondent agreed or strongly agreed that they were given an introduction to the work of the board. The parent and trustee nominees serving on community boards were less positive than their counterparts on voluntary secondary boards. Item 52 (item 51 in the case of the principals) sought a response to the statement that the trustees ensured that each new board was briefed on its role and responsibilities.

Item 52	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY SEC	ONDARY							
PARENT	6	22	16	59	4	15	1	4
TEACHER	10	31	14	44	7	22	1	3
TRUSTEE	25	44	29	51	2	4	1	2
PRINCIPAL	5	29	10	59	-	-	2	12
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	3	11	15	54	10	36	-	-
TEACHER	1	4	12	44	12	44	2	7
TRUSTEE	16	23	29	41	22	31	4	6
PRINCIPAL	-	-	6	32	11	58	2	10

Table 7. 34The trustees ensure that each new board is briefed on its role and responsibilities.

The pattern in the response was not as positive as it was in the case of the preceding item – item 67 (Table 7.33). The trustees of the community boards provide less briefing on the role and responsibilities of the board for community boards than the trustees of the voluntary secondary boards. The majority of teacher nominees on the community boards were of this view. Less than a third of the community principals indicated that the trustees briefed their boards, while the vast majority of their voluntary secondary counterparts indicated that their boards were briefed. Taking items 67 and 52 together, board members indicated that they were given an introduction to the work of the board and were briefed on their role and responsibilities. The trustees of the voluntary secondary boards were more likely to brief their board nominees that the trustees of the community boards were to brief their board nominees. Voluntary secondary trustees tended to be closer to the voluntary secondary boards and to take a greater interest in them than was the case with the trustees of the community boards. A voluntary secondary trustee nominee commented negatively on what appeared to her to be an unsatisfactory method of appointment of trustee nominees in a way that suggested a distance between the trustees and the boards:

I think prospective board members should be given a brief of their role and responsibility on the board. I would like to see written criteria for the selection of trustee members – it surely cannot be of any help to the Board of Management if the only question asked of (a potential nominee) is his/her permission to be placed on the board (Community Trustee Nominee).

Item 66 of the questionnaire for nominees and item 71 of the questionnaire for principals relate also to training and board induction. These items invited responses to the statement that most members of the board rely on informal discussions and observation of how things were done to learn about their role and responsibilities.

Table 7.35Most members of the board rely on informal discussions and observation of howthings are done to learn about their role and responsibilities.

Item 66	Strongly agree		Agree	Agree		Disagree		gly ree
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY SE	CONDA	RY						
PARENT	2	7	16	59	9	33	-	-
TEACHER	4	13	15	47	13	41	-	-
TRUSTEE	3	5	16	28	30	53	8	14
PRINCIPAL	5	29	5	29	6	35	1	6
COMMUNITY								
PARENT	2	7	13	46	13	46	-	-
TEACHER			18	69	8	31	-	-
TRUSTEE	4	6	37	52	26	37	4	6
PRINCIPAL	3	16	16	84	-	-	-	-

A small majority of all categories of nominee respondent on both boards, with the exception of trustee nominees on voluntary secondary boards, agreed with the statement. On community boards, teacher nominees indicated strongest agreement. While the responses to items 52 (Table 7.34) and 67 (Table 7.33) indicate that formal induction is given to new members on their roles and responsibilities, the response to this item suggests that this induction is not adequate for the majority of board nominees, especially parent and teacher nominees. Inevitably, board members will use informal means such as discussions with friends, other board members to help them to clarify and understand their role. Relying on such means can leave members in danger of being introduced to particular understandings of their role and poor practices that may limit their contribution to the board.

A summary point on the issue of preparation was put to nominees in item 71. Did board members feel adequately prepared for their role?

Item 71	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagr	ee	Strong	gly Disagree
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY SI	ECONDA	ARY						
PARENT	6	22	18	67	2	7	1	4
TEACHER	6	19	22	69	4	13	-	-
TRUSTEE	21	41	29	57	1	2	-	-
COMMUNITY	_	21	17	50	~	21		
PARENT	6	21	17	59	6	21	-	-
TEACHER	9	33	16	59	2	7	-	-
TRUSTEE	29	40	40	56	3	4	-	-

Table 7.36As a board member, I feel adequately prepared for my role.

There was a strong agreement among all the respondents that they felt adequately prepared for their role. There was a marked difference between the perceptions of the voluntary secondary and community principals on a related item. They were asked in Item 72 of their questionnaire to indicate whether their board members were adequately prepared through training for their role.

Table 7.37	Board members are adequately p	prepared through training for their role.
------------	--------------------------------	---

Item 72 (Principals)	Strong agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	N	%	N	%	Ν	%	N	%
VOLUNTARY SEC	CONDARY	Y						
PRINCIPAL	5	29	5	29	6	35	1	6
COMMUNITY								
PRINCIPAL	3	16	16	84	-	-	-	-

A small majority of the voluntary secondary principals agreed or strongly agreed that members of the board were adequately prepared for their role, while the response of the community principals was unanimous. The sharp difference may reflect the underlying tensions that were noted in the discussion on the professional/lay relationship on voluntary secondary boards in the previous section. Item 75 of the questionnaire for principals invited the principals to respond to the statement that there was no need for formal training of board members.

Item P. 75	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree		
	N	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	Ν	%	
VOLUNTARY SEC.									
PRINCIPALS	5	33	1	6	0	-	9	60	
COMMUNITY									
PRINCIPALS	3	19	4	25	4	25	5	31	

Table 7.38There is no need for the formal training of board members.

While the majority of principals disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, it is notable that 40% of voluntary secondary and 44% of community principals agreed that formal training was not necessary. The response, particularly from community principals, does not reflect the strong value placed by them on new members having competencies and expertise in areas related to education, as set out in the response to item 20 (Table 6.5) in chapter 6, section 1.3.

The most frequent suggestion from both voluntary secondary and community board members for making their boards more effective in managing the schools was for training and in-service for board members.

- It is my opinion that board members who are not teachers need extensive training and adequate communication skills to create a professional body capable of making decisions based on knowledge and understanding (Voluntary Secondary Principal)
- There is need for more training in people skills to help in dealing with problems that arise in school/teacher pupil relationship (Voluntary Secondary Trustee Nominee).
- I think it is essential that there be training of board members. I think prospective members should be given a brief and trained for their role and responsibility (Community Trustee Nominee).
- I feel that the parent representatives in particular suffer from a lack of knowledge of the day to day operations of the school and should be given a more detailed induction (Community Teacher Nominee).
- In service for board members is essential (Community Principal).

7.4.1 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Kerr (1964), Ziegler and Jennings (1974), Cistone (1975 and 1977) in their work on the socialisation and inculturation of board members, and Rallis et al. (1993) on the training needs of boards, underlined the necessity for proper induction procedures for boards. Initial and on-going

training reflect the commitment of the board members and their trustees to their own selfdevelopment as self-reliant and confident partners charged with an important task. It is an aspect of the educational dimension of a board's responsibilities that it takes steps to ensure that the board is well informed about the school, education in general, its own roles and responsibilities, as well as its own performance. Training for board members must go beyond providing just information and skills to helping them to grow, and to think creatively. This should help board members develop solutions rather than apply formulae in response to issues that arise, and to develop trust and teamwork in a group that continues to learn (Danzberger, 1986; Anderson, 1987).

There is no regulation that obliges trustees to brief their boards on their role and their responsibilities other than an implied obligation based on their duty to appoint the board, and their responsibility in the context of their trusts for the actions of the board. In the case of voluntary secondary boards, the duty of briefing new boards falls often - but not universally - to the chairperson of the board, alone or with a member of the leadership team of the religious congregation responsible for the school, or with the owners of the school. The Council of Managers of Catholic Secondary Schools (CMCSS) provides induction courses for new principals as well as for members of boards. New board members are usually encouraged to attend these courses. Some, though not all, of the religious orders and the school owners provide in-service courses for board members serving on boards of management in their schools. Most of the larger religious congregations responsible for many schools maintain an education office or desk to support their schools. The Conference of Managers and the Joint Managerial Body provide a central secretariat to represent and serve the schools. This functions through a central office and a regional structure. The principals and board chairpersons attend its meetings.

In the case of the community boards, the practice of induction and briefing of new boards and board members appears to be less organised. In general, there is not a united approach involving the Vocational Education Committees and the religious groups. Some, but not all the religious congregations provide in-service for board members. Consequently, the introduction of new members to the board often falls to the board officers – secretary and chairperson – and continuing board members. The Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACS), the national body that represents the interests of the boards and supports the schools, also provides courses and seminars. Occasionally, the ACS organises regional based meetings. The bulk of the courses provided tend to be technically oriented dealing with school management issues such as employment law, curriculum, financial management, and ongoing issues that arise and that impact

on the schools. Currently, training seems to be presented very much in terms of knowledge and information, and supports the view of the board as a forum of experts. Danzberger et al. (1986, p, 12) criticised this form of training as "merely informational and episodic" rather than "skills-building." The response of board members on both voluntary secondary and community boards to "skills-building" may be less than to the more immediate "informational" issues, thus making the provision of such training "non-viable" in economic terms. Nevertheless, they are essential as an investment in the future of the board. Like the CMCSS, the ACS provides a central secretariat. Both the ACS and the CMCSS issue regular Newsletters to boards. These private publications provide information about current and ongoing issues of interest to the boards.

The data indicated that there was a lack of a coherent approach to training and its delivery.

- A substantial majority of all categories of respondent agreed that they had been given an introduction to the work of the board. Voluntary secondary trustees were more likely than community trustees to ensure that each new board was briefed on its role and responsibilities.
- On the community boards, less than half of the teacher nominees and a third of the principals agreed that their trustees briefed their boards. Over a third of the parent and trustee nominees indicated that their boards were not briefed by their trustees. If regular formal briefings were provided, a less divided response might be expected from nominees, and a more positive response from the principals as long serving board members. The response is also notable in the light of earlier responses that indicated a distance between community boards and their trustees in that it indicates a potential reason for the perceived distance.
- With the exception of voluntary secondary trustee nominees, a majority of all categories of nominee agreed that most members of the board relied on informal discussions and observations to learn about their role and responsibilities. For these respondents the formal briefings provided were inadequate. The informal socialisation process was an important source of training for them.
- While respondents uniformly indicated they were clear about the role of the board and felt adequately prepared for their roles, they still felt a need for training.
- There was almost unanimous agreement from the principals that their boards were adequately prepared. Yet, the most frequent suggestion from the members for making the boards more effective in managing the schools was for training and in-service for board members.

Most of the calls for training for board members came from the principals and trustee nominees. There was no call for training expressed by parent nominees and only one by teacher nominees. The findings of Boyd (1976), Danzberger (1986), and Raab et al. (1997) suggest that training needs must be felt by the board members themselves before any intervention will either be responded to or appreciated. In the context of the voluntary nature of board service, time is an important consideration. Munn and Brown (1989, p. 16 quoted in Thody, 1990, p.6) made the same point. They stated that there were tight limits to the amount of time voluntary workers want or are able to spend on training. They believed that an overemphasis on training might discourage potential board members. Training will encroach on board time. It is an issue of priorities. By concentrating on their policy role and devoting less time to management issues, boards may be able to devote more time to their own development.

The data on the background of board members suggests that many board members have a solid base of knowledge and skills that they bring to the board from other committees or from a professional background. Chait, Holland and Taylor (1993) found less effective boards assumed that prior experience was sufficient for board members, and that they did not need to be oriented to the role and responsibilities of the board. They also found that reliance on "on-the-job" experience to make up the deficits was not enough. Effective boards did not leave the orientation of board members to chance. They did not rely passively on other informal means of induction. Effective boards needed initial and ongoing support and training as well as time for reflection and self-evaluation. The data suggest that there is a difficulty with the current induction processes on boards, particularly on community boards. Boards, as formal groups, need a shared knowledge base as well as support that enables them to operate responsibly and effectively, hence the importance of the induction processes.

Ongoing review and evaluation of role, supported by training and development, is stressed as important in the board studies across all the jurisdictions reviewed for the continuing effectiveness of the boards. Boards can be held in the grip of a culture that is passive and reactive, or they can accept the challenge of building a board culture that is active and collaborative on the basis of well articulated values, beliefs, norms and expectations. Hence, review by the board of its own operations, commitment to building a positive board culture through creating shared beliefs and expectations, and developing positive attitudes, relationships, and standards, is important. Effective boards take the necessary steps to ensure that their members are informed about the role and responsibilities of the board. These steps also serve to strengthen board cohesion and boost confidence.

7.5 PERCEIVED EFFECTIVENESS OVERALL

Item 75 had thirteen sub-items and attempted to draw together the main themes of the questionnaires under these sub-items. Nominees and principals were invited to indicate whether they were very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, or very dissatisfied in response to each item. In the case of nominees, they were invited to respond from their perspective as individual board members, while principals were invited to give their perception of their boards. The following three tables set out the responses in terms of percentage satisfaction on voluntary secondary and community boards, and among the principals. The detailed tables are included in appendix four.

Table 7.39 (Voluntary secondary boards) Taking everything into account, I am satisfied that:

		PARENT	TEACHER	TRUSTEE	PRINCIP.
		%	%	%	%
75.1	I have a good understanding of how my board operates.	92	100	100	88
75.2	My board is an effective leader for the school.	78	84	99	88
75.3	My board makes a difference in how the school functions.	78	78	100	88
75.4	My board determines policy for the school.	74	75	88	82
75.5	All board members are welcome to participate at meetings.	92	87	95	100
75.6	I have a good working relationship with the members.	96	97	98	100
75.7	I have a good working relationship with the principal.	94	87	100	100
75.8	I have an influence on board decision making.	96	84	95	100
75.9	I have access to the information I need.	82	91	100	94
75.1	I have a good knowledge of what is happening in school.	78	93	94	94
75.12	I have an understanding of educational issues.	86	97	94	77
73.13	The board deals with significant issues of policy.	77	88	95	82
75.14	The board has made the management more democratic.	92	88	98	94
76	My experience as a board member has been rewarding.	71	73	87	65

Table 7.40(Community boards) Taking everything into account, I am satisfied that:

		PARENT	TEACHER	TRUSTEE	PRINCIP.
		%	%	%	%
75.1	I have a good understanding of how my board operates.	97	100	100	100
75.2	My board is an effective leader for the school.	90	93	94	100
75.3	My board makes a difference in how the school functions.	90	81	92	94
75.4	My board determines policy for the school.	90	85	93	79
75.5	All board members are welcome to participate at meetings.	93	93	100	100
75.6	I have a good working relationship with the members.	93	100	99	100
75.7	I have a good working relationship with the principal.	93	89	96	100
75.8	I have an influence on board decision making.	93	85	96	100
75.9	I have access to the information I need.	93	93	98	100
75.1	I have a good knowledge of what is happening in school.	97	96	93	95
75.12	I have an understanding of educational issues.	100	96	94	89
73.13	The board deals with significant issues of policy.	90	89	93	84
75.14	The board has made the management more democratic.	90	88	91	100
76	My experience as a board member has been rewarding.	87	70	80	91

	Taking everything into account, my board	PRINCIPALS Voluntary %	PRINCIPALS Community %
76.1	has a good understanding of its role,	88	100
76.2		88	100
	is an effective leader for the school,		
76.3	makes a difference in how school functions,	88	94
76.4	determines policy for the school,	82	79
76.5	welcomes participation from all its members,	100	100
76.6	has good working relationships among members,	100	100
76.7	has good working relationship with principal,	100	100
76.8	is a democratic decision-making body,	100	100
76.9	has access to information for decision-making,	94	100
76.1	has a knowledge of what is happening in school,	94	95
76.11	has sufficient understanding of educational issues,	77	89
76.12	deals with significant issues of policy,	82	84
76.13	has made management more democratic.	94	100
77	My experience as a board member has been rewarding.	65	91

Table 7.41 (Principals) Taking everything into account, I am satisfied that my board:

The majority of the nominees and principals indicated a very positive picture of their boards. The majority of the nominees indicated that they were very satisfied that they had a good understanding of how the board operated. Almost all the principals indicated satisfaction that their board had a good understanding of its role. All categories of respondent indicated that their boards made a difference in how their schools functioned. They were very satisfied that all board members were welcome to participate at meetings. The nominee respondents and principals were almost unanimous that they had a good working relationship with other board members. A majority of the nominees on both boards had a good working relationship with the school principal. They indicated a high level of satisfaction with their influence on board decisionmaking. The responses to item 75.9 indicated that board members from all categories believed that they had access to sufficient information for good decision-making. They believed that they had a good knowledge of what was happening in the school. The great majority of respondents indicated that they had a sufficient understanding of the educational issues that arose at board meetings. They were satisfied that boards dealt with significant issues of policy for the ongoing success of the school. A very large majority of all categories of respondent, including principals, indicated that they were satisfied that the advent of boards of management had made the management of the schools more democratic. There were dissenting views on particular issues.

Teacher nominees on voluntary board indicated most dissent from the general view that all board members were welcome to participate at meetings of the board. Teacher nominees of the nominees on both boards were most likely to indicate dissatisfaction with their level of influence on board decision-making. Parent nominees on voluntary secondary boards indicated the highest level of dissent from this general view regarding access to information for decision-making. Parent nominees on voluntary boards were the most likely nominees to disagree with the general view of respondents that they had sufficient understanding of the educational issues that arose at meetings.

Community board members tended to be more positive in their general perception of their board than voluntary secondary board members. With the exception of their perception of the quality of relationships on the boards and with their principals, and their perception that the boards had made the management more democratic, voluntary secondary parents indicated a lower level of satisfaction with their boards than did their community counterparts. Teacher nominees on both boards indicated a generally similar level of satisfaction on all the issues, though the voluntary secondary teachers were less positive in their view of the board as an effective leader and policy maker. Trustee nominees on voluntary secondary boards were marginally more satisfied on most issues than the trustee nominees on community boards. The voluntary secondary principals were less satisfied on most issues than the community principals.

The general overview of perceived effectiveness presents a positive picture of the boards and their operations as they are seen in the general view of the board members. When measured against the detail presented in the data set out and discussed in chapter six and seven and the literature, it shows that there is a substantial difference between the general perception of the boards and the realities of their operations.

Item 76, included in tables 7.39, 7.40, and 7.41 above, invited nominees to describe their reaction to working as members of the Board of Management. Respondents were given a choice of five responses – highly rewarding, rewarding, mixed, frustrating, and very frustrating. Trustee nominees on both boards indicated the highest satisfaction with their experience. Parent nominees on voluntary secondary boards, and teacher nominees on both boards indicated greatest dissatisfaction. Though a large majority of voluntary secondary principals found the experience of working with their boards at least rewarding, their overall response was substantially less positive than that of their counterparts on community boards. Over a third of the voluntary

secondary principals indicated that their experience was mixed at best. Their response largely reflected that of the parent and teacher nominees on their boards. Parent and teacher nominees and principals on voluntary secondary boards indicated that they found the experience less rewarding than that of their counterparts on the community boards. Overall, a large majority of the nominee respondents from each category of respondent indicated that they found their experience of working as board members rewarding. This positive experience, coupled with the high level of goodwill towards the boards indicated in the general data, is a valuable asset that can be developed in the interests of the school.

The questionnaire invited general comments and opinions on how their boards might be made more effective in managing their schools. There were positive comments supporting the boards and the work that was being done on both boards. The following comments are from eight different boards:

- Our board functions very well... It is very democratic and operates very well but it is really only a rubber stamp (Voluntary Secondary Teacher Nominee).
- I appreciate the commitment of the other members of the board their support, their interest and open showing of opinions in our various discussions (Voluntary Secondary Trustee Nominee).
- The success of our board is the partnership between principal, trustees, teachers, and parents. The interest of the school comes before any personal gain (Voluntary Secondary Parent Nominee).
- I am very happy with my present board... (Voluntary Secondary Principal).
- Our Board is doing a fine job (Community Board Parent Nominee).
- I don't believe that it is possible for the board to become more effective than it is already (Community Board Trustee Nominee).
- Being on the board has given me a broader perspective on issues (Community Board Teacher Nominee)
- I feel I am blessed with a very supportive board. Maybe the board is too uncritical and a more aggressive board might do better for the school (Community Board Principal).

There were comments that indicated different levels of satisfaction and areas of concern with the current composition, mandate and operations of the boards. These have been used in the general presentation of the data in chapters six and seven.

7.6 CONCLUSION

Chapters six and seven have presented the data generated by the study described in chapter five. They have set out and discussed the data following the general themes underpinning the study set out in chapter five. There is a strong similarity between the general findings of this study and the findings in the literature reviewed in chapters two, three and four. The following chapter will present a review of the study and will revisit the research questions raised in chapter one. It will also present a set of general conclusions and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER EIGHT

REVIEW OF THE STUDY, REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.

This study sought to advance the understanding of the boards of management as they were functioning in a sample of voluntary secondary and community schools in Ireland just prior to the enactment of the Education Act (Ireland) (1998). The purpose of the study was to investigate the perception of board members as nominees of the primary stakeholders - parents, teachers, trustees - and the school principals of the effectiveness of their boards as instruments of participatory governance. The focus was on effectiveness in the context of the board, and whether board members influenced schools as envisaged in the general policy of participation in their management. The study was based on forty boards of management from voluntary secondary and community schools. Twenty-one voluntary secondary and nineteen community boards were included. This, the concluding chapter of the study, is set out in four sections. Section one presents a review of the study. Section two revisits the research questions posed in section two of chapter one. Section three presents the conclusions of the study. Section four sets out recommendations for further research and closes the study

8.1 REVIEW OF THE STUDY

The study was prompted by the findings of a case study of a board of management completed by the writer in 1994 (Mungovan, 1994), and the absence in the Irish context of any specific study on the operations of boards of management at second level in Irish schools. A small range of studies relating to boards of management at primary school level was identified. At the time the idea for this study was conceived, the debate that led to the Education Act (Ireland) (1998) was underway. Part of that debate related to administrative policies and structures for Irish education including proposals for a revised role for boards of management. In the case study (Mungovan, 1994), a range of literature relating to the development of school boards in the United Kingdom over the period from the 1970s to the 1990s was reviewed. In that literature, there were numerous references to a literature on school boards in the United States. In the current study, this literature, and the literature relating to United States, Canada, and Australia, was addressed to determine the critical issues for effective governance in the context of school-based management. At one level, the purpose was to determine what constituted effective management from the

perspective of governments and proponents of school-based management reform - what was the context and the rationale behind the changes being introduced in the different jurisdictions? At another level, the purpose was to address the practice on boards and similar educational management bodies as it emerged from a range of studies dealing with board operations - how were the objectives set for the local governance structures being realised? These two strands were used to construct chapters two and three of the study.

Chapter two reviewed the trends in the macro governance structures and the models of management in the educational system of the United Kingdom and systems in the United States, Canada, and Australia. The objective was to extrapolate from the literature the major trends in educational governance related to general education reform in these democracies, and to sketch the principal factors that were contributing to new management practices in the schools, particularly school-based management boards and councils. In these systems, the process of schooling was moving from a top-down bureaucratic model that provided educational services to passive audiences, to a collaborative model that included the clients of the service (Caldwell, 1995, p. 35). In the collaborative model, groups influenced by educational decisions were invited to participate in the process of making them, and to take a consequent responsibility for them. The traditional primacy of the professional provider was under challenge. Traditional routine practices and systems were being challenged and revised. Devolutionary policies based on participative democratic ideals such as stakeholder and community involvement in collaborative decision-making were driving the change. School-based management structures based on democratic principles of subsidiarity, participation, partnership, equality, and quality were being put in place within a framework of local management and accountability at the school level. Participative processes at local level were intended to broaden the exercise of power and accountability, and to include parents and teachers with trustees and/or other related interests. Central government education departments were meant to assume a policy-based co-ordinating role. The literature indicates that there are difficult tensions in the revised frameworks. Despite these tensions, the concept of the locally managed school as a key element of a decentralised school system is firmly established, though the debate about how the school should be managed is ongoing as different jurisdictions adopt different central and local structures. Societies are undergoing major changes in their self-understanding and in their structures as they move from a centralised to a decentralised model of service delivery, from representative to participatory democracy, and from an hierarchical to a more organic approach in their understanding and practice of leadership. School boards and councils are part of these changes.

Chapters two and three are linked on the assumption that what happens at the level of the school boards of management depends on the macro-environments in which these boards operate. Chapter three examined a range of literature relating to board operations at micro-level in the changing educational environments described in chapter two. It continued to address the literature to determine what was known about how school boards and councils operated in practice. The literature revealed concerns and problems about the practical application of the principles stated for the revision of the structures. Changing the central structures was not sufficient to bring about innovation and participation at the level of local school management. It took considerable effort to move from a centralised to a decentralised model of management. There were barriers to be addressed. The literature underlined that a significant obstacle facing local boards of management related to how they could overcome the status quo through encouraging the educational professionals to share their authority and expertise, and the lay members to share in the responsibility for deciding school policy. Participants on existing boards and councils were hesitant to challenge traditional norms and roles. Many were reluctant to exercise the authority they were given, or appeared to lack the resources to take the challenge, while others sought to expand their role. Effective boards or councils were difficult to create and required considerable investment of time, energy, and knowledge. Becoming a fully functioning member of a board, becoming informed and influential in that capacity, took time and required a strong level of support in various forms, among them training, structural support, and on-going monitoring of activities. Despite the differences in context and in structures across the systems, the studies on school boards of governors, school-based councils, and boards of management, substantially reflect similar underlying concepts and concerns based on generally similar reform principles. There is a concern in all the jurisdictions that the rhetoric of devolution and school-based management boards does not match or, in some instances, does not have any credible relationship with the practical reality on the ground.

In the Irish context, school-based management boards have become an established feature of educational management. Chapter four outlined the context in which boards of management developed in Ireland. It outlined the structures and the role of these boards as set out in their Deeds of Trust and Articles and Instruments of Management. The intent behind the establishment of the boards was to provide a forum and a decision-making body that would include parents and teachers with the trustees. Through this body, it was expected that parents and teachers could influence the direction and quality of the education provided by their schools, within the

constraints set by the trusts, and the regulations of the Department of Education and Science. The chapter discussed the concept of organisational effectiveness in general, and related it to the particular context of the board of management. The chapter suggested that the current effectiveness of the boards as vehicles for a collaborative and participatory management approach could be assessed using the perceptions of the board members, and the themes that emerged from the literature on board operations set out in chapters two and three. These themes, discussed in chapter four with reference to the general literature, provided a basis for a conceptual working synthesis of issues that were addressed in the empirical study described in chapter five. The main elements of the synthesis were:

- the role the board played whether it was primarily a policy-making or administrative instrument;
- the orientation of board members and the relationships between the different groups and individuals on the boards and with their constituents;
- the responsiveness of the boards to their constituent groups;
- the openness of board processes, information flow and board decision-making;
- the climate and culture of the boards;
- board accountability;
- the commitment of boards to their own development.

Chapter five set out the structure of the empirical study, its limitations, and how it was conducted. It emphasised that this was a general and exploratory study based on the perceptions of the board members. Two survey questionnaires were developed – one for board nominees and another for principals/board secretaries. A response rate of 70% was achieved from the nominee respondents on the boards – parent, teacher, and trustee nominees. The response rate from the principals was 90%. Considering the voluntary nature of their participation in the study, the length of the questionnaires, and the pressure of work at the particular time of year during which the empirical study was conducted, the level of support and co-operation given to the study was very encouraging. It suggested a high level of interest among board members in the subject of the study. The data from the study are analysed, presented, and discussed in chapters six and seven. The data are presented around three main themes – roles, relationships, and processes. Chapter six presents the data about the respondents, and the areas of the study relating primarily to the roles the boards are exercising. Chapter seven presents the data on board processes and relationships.

The following section revisits the research questions set out in section two of chapter one in the light of the findings set out in chapters six and seven.

8.2 **REVISITING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**.

8.2.1 Is the role of the board understood by the board itself, among the members, and among their nominators?

To manage its school successfully, a board needs to understand its role and to have that role understood among its stakeholder groups. The general view indicated by the respondents was that the boards, the board members, and their constituencies understood the role of the board in the school. There were strong indications of uncertainty among the parent nominees and their constituencies. The general findings indicate inadequacies in the understanding and practice of the role of the boards when that general understanding and practice is measured against the characteristics of effective boards identified in the literature and used in the study.

The general profile of the board members suggests that the boards included in their membership a relatively expert group of people in both education and group-related activities. The level of educational expertise and the skills represented in the board membership were not obvious in the activities and in the concerns of the board itself. It is notable, given the background of the membership and their involvement with the school prior to their appointment, their professional backgrounds, as well as the reported influence of the principal in setting the agenda for the board, that the strategic and educational agendas of the board were limited. The boards did not appear to have a strong focus on student outcomes.

The boards have difficulties establishing their boundaries – the extent of their authority in areas such as curriculum, finance, staff issues, and whether they were primarily administrative or policy bodies. Their practice suggested that they saw their role more in terms of operational than of policy decision-making. There was a lack of consistency between board policy and board practice on many boards. While the majority of the board members indicated that their boards had an agreed set of values according to which they managed their school, these were not always taken into account in dealing with issues before the boards, particularly in the case of the community school boards.

The boards did not function as truly collegial bodies. The influence of the professionals in the decision-making process was more substantial than that of the parent nominees. There were particular difficulties in achieving broadly based parental involvement with and support for the boards in both voluntary secondary and community school sectors. There was a difficulty in the links between some community school boards and their trustees. Accountability and responsiveness to others are central to the role of the board. In terms of accountability and of responsiveness, the practice of the boards and their commitment to holding their schools accountable, and being accountable and responsive themselves to their trustees and their constituencies, suggest that these values were not priority values for many of them.

Despite the majority view of the respondents that the role of the board was understood, the potential of the role was not translated into practice. Many of the boards continued to operate in the tradition, and out of the mind-set, of the single manager within the school. Because both principals and board members seem satisfied with this, an intervention that will develop a deeper understanding of the role is indicated in order to improve their effectiveness. The combination of principals willing to take control, and of board members willing to accept a role that was limited to the approval - following a critical review - of policies presented by the professionals, adds little by way of value to a school. The boards, in many of the schools, constitute a potential but underused resource.

While induction is provided for board members, it is not seen as adequate. The Education Act (Ireland) (1998) provides a framework for the boards to address the need for clarification of their roles and responsibilities, and an opportunity, in its implementation, for a revitalising intervention to restate and to strengthen their role. The challenge is one of change – how boards can be encouraged to accept their full role, to move from a centralised to a decentralised model of management that requires them to be active in their own interests, rather than dependent on centralised systems or subservient to professional groups. It calls for leadership from the trustees and those they serve to be open to change in the culture and the climate of school management. Training coupled with ongoing support and accountability measures need to be implemented at the level of the school, the constituencies, and at board level, so that there is a clear understanding throughout the system of the respective responsibilities of all the parties, and the overall role of the board. A formal training process would assist board members to define and to deepen their

understanding of their roles and responsibilities in managing their schools. The primary thrust of that role is in setting a vision and purpose for the school. When there is no overriding vision, the focus of the activities of the boards is likely to revert to particular problems, and these, rather than the overriding purpose, are likely to determine the business of the board. The data, in indicating good working relationships on the boards, an interest in the school, willingness to address difficult issues and to give primacy to needs of the school, show a level of goodwill among board members that augurs well for a process of renewal and change. In the following sections, particular aspects of the role will be discussed in response to the research questions. The primary thrust of that role is in setting policy for the school.

8.2.2 Do the boards provide leadership through the development of policy for their schools?

The effective board plans for and enables its school to live up to its mission and obligations. As indicated in the review of the literature in chapter four, making a clear distinction between administration and policy, between means and ends, is seen by many scholars as the key to understanding board operations. The board's primary task is to set goals within the terms of the mission of the school, and to monitor how the actions and outcomes of the school reflect and promote the values underpinning its mission. Its mission and its goals, rather than particular issues and the problems that may arise ought to set the thrust and the tone for the activities of the board. Setting such a strategic thrust broadens the perspective of the board and encourages it to look to the future and the trends and influences that will impact on its school. It sets a direction and a foundation for problem solving. Where such a thrust exists, there is likely to be less micromanagement, less chance of being pre-occupied with day-to-day problems, and less dwelling on issues for their own sake. The data show that the generality of board members were not deeply involved at a strategic level in determining policies, or in evaluating the effectiveness of the policies being implemented. They were not engaging primarily with policy issues. They were more likely to approve policies presented to them after varying amounts of discussion and probing, than to initiate policies. In doing this, because it limits their focus, boards are less likely to be inclusive of their stakeholder interests. Involving these interests goes to the heart of the democracy that the board is expected to promote in the management of the schools for the benefit of all.

The majority of the board members saw the role of their boards more as administrative decisionmakers than as policy- makers for their schools in central areas of their functioning. The boards did not have a clear knowledge of their responsibilities in the areas of curriculum, board operations, or personnel management. They tended to consider administrative issues such as discipline or maintenance, more than strategic matters. While they did not avoid problems facing the school and had dealt with difficult issues, the indications were that these related more to administrative than strategic matters. Boards that concern themselves with matters that are primarily administrative run the risk of loosing their perspective, their energy, and probably, due to frustration, potentially valuable members.

Setting school policy - while it includes matters related to assets and resources - goes beyond their administrative aspects to setting the principles for their deployment and thus to issues related to the direction of the school, its priorities for curriculum, student achievement, school and staff development, and performance among others. To the extent that boards did not consider these issues, or gave priority to their administrative rather than their policy aspects, it is taken to indicate a lack of understanding among them of their role. Boards need to be made aware of their primary role, and to appreciate the scope as well as the limitations of that role within their delegated mandate, and within the macro-structures of educational management. As effective leaders, they work to support and motivate others to strive for the achievement of clearly articulated and agreed objectives (Peters and Waterman, 1982; Bothwell, 1983).

The primacy given to administrative issues at board level suggests a lack of confidence and experience in fulfilling the management function of the board. The data suggest reasons why this might be so – the growing complexity of the school-management environment, the lack of sufficient and appropriate induction and training, the low level of consultation by the members of the seed documents that set out the terms of reference of the boards. In so far as it indicates a lack of participation and collaboration, it supports the conclusion that many of the boards have not evolved substantially beyond the single manager concept, and that the power-relationships on the boards have not changed significantly since their establishment. That this change has not taken place may be due to a perception among board members that it is not necessary, or even possible. It is not necessary because the schools and their existing management structures are adequate in their view. It is not possible because the extent of the level of central control appears to leave the scope for local innovation and the possibility of having any real influence so limited that it is hardly worth the effort – particularly when that effort is voluntary and unremunerated. Neither perception is acceptable. Boards, in the terms of their seed documents, have substantial responsibilities.

While the distinction between policy and administration is helpful in understanding the role of the board and the school administration, a rigid differentiation between the policy and administrative roles in all situations is not practical. Policy and policy statements can be developed in anticipation and as determinants of future actions. They also evolve out of experience and in response to issues and circumstances facing the school. There may be difficult situations facing a school that are technically administrative e.g. lawsuits, contracts that fail, tragedies. Principals and schools would be likely to take a poor view of a board that did not get involved in such situations on the basis that its role was to determine policy. Too rigid a distinction may make it difficult for boards and school administrations to unite in support of their common interest – the school. McCurdy (1993) argued that boards and administrators work best together when there was flexibility between the policy-making and administrative areas of management. The data indicate that boards rely heavily on their principals for information and guidance. They also indicate that the principals play a substantial initiating role in policy development on the boards – a role that goes beyond the administrative and that suggests that they are, on many boards, the primary promoters of change through offering solutions to problems encountered in the operation of the schools. The knowledge and expertise of the principals as full time administrators, as against the limited part-time involvement the board members, can explain the role being exercised by the principals. Differentiating the roles of boards and school administrations along the lines of policy and administration is useful in setting parameters for their respective roles. The distinction between the roles gives a useful indication of their thrust, and while it indicates the formal relationships between boards and school administration, it does not adequately describe the realities of the relationship between the two.

The data indicated that a working relationship existed between the boards and their principals, with which both principals and boards were generally satisfied. Board members were satisfied that principals were not encroaching on the role of the boards, and principals were satisfied that their boards did not encroach on their role as principals. The findings of this study suggested that this satisfactory relationship, as perceived by the respondents, was based on a limited understanding of the role of the board. The findings suggest that boards need to invest time and other resources in determining what are their essential and non-essential activities. They need to reflect on and determine the working relationship between their responsibilities and that of their administrations. Using the policy/administration model may help them in this process. Boards are not extensions of the administration. Dealing with administrative tasks as they arise deprives

them of the opportunity to take a strategic view of their schools. Where principals have a substantial influence in determining the board agenda, it is likely that they will ensure that the issues of concern that they see as priorities for the school will be raised. Given the administrative thrust of the role of the principal, these are more likely to be administrative issues than policy issues. One way of ensuring that strategic issues are addressed at board level is for the board members to insist that these issues are included in the agenda for the board. The review of responsibilities will require some boards to revisit their agenda-setting process to ensure that the access of all board members to the process is not only equal, but is seen to be equal. If the agenda of the board gets over-involved in administration and bureaucracy, it becomes a supervisory rather than a policy group.

Under the Education Act (Ireland) (1998), there is an external monitoring process of boards related to board accountability. Boards also need their own internal reviews. While external monitoring will serve to legitimise the activities of the board in terms of the evaluating agency, the board also needs to evaluate and to legitimise itself on terms that it agrees for itself. The two monitoring processes together – internal and external – may help balance the limitations of either form on its own. For monitoring to be successful there needs to be agreed measures of board performance and competencies. This study suggests a range of areas and issues around which a monitoring process might be developed.

8.2.3 How do board members perceive the orientation of their boards, understood in terms of operating out of a nominee or delegate style?

In describing board members as nominees, the Deed of Trust and the Articles of Management indicate that the primary responsibility of the members is to the school, and not to the sectional interests of the nominating groups. In the perception of all the categories of nominee respondents, their group affiliations did not affect their commitment to the school, or their willingness to give priority to its needs above their particular interests. All groups indicated that they were willing to compromise when there was a conflict between the interests of the school and those of their nominators. Though board members might act out of a representational stance on issues, the corporate interests of the school got priority when it came to decisions. Of the respondents, teacher nominees indicated that they, more than other categories, experienced conflicts of interest, and a stronger inclination to act according to a delegate style. For the teacher nominees, the work of the board may have had more immediate relevance and potentially more immediate

implications, than for the other categories of nominee. Teacher nominees also represented an organised constituency with which they were in regular contact and to which they were held accountable. Teachers were likely to come to the board with an agenda generated through this contact. This was likely to influence their orientation.

The rationale for the involvement of parents and teachers on the boards goes beyond representation. The effective board will approach issues from the broad perspective of the school, and will actively encourage the stakeholder nominees to express their points of view. In this way, as described by Chait, Holland and Taylor (1993, p.59), the board will have an opportunity so evaluate important issues through several different "lenses." While this can complicate a board's deliberations, "with thoughtful discussion the component parts eventually make sense as a whole precisely because the board took time and care to survey a problem from numerous vantage points."(p.63). The data indicated that the generality of board members took a wider view of their role that went beyond representation. They also suggest that the boards operate according to an "elite/sacred/trustee" rather than a "delegate/representative" orientation. There was little overt conflict in the decision-making processes. Decisions were reached by consensus rather than by majority voting. There was a spirit of trust and cohesiveness on the boards. The majority of respondents from both types of board indicated that they did not often experience a conflict of loyalty between the interests of the school and those of their nominators. At the same time, it is unreasonable to expect that stakeholder nominees will approach the board of management as neutral observers and participants without some agenda. Such an approach would suggest a degree of detachment, not only from the work of the board, but from the realities and needs of the nominating groups, and could lead to lack of board credibility, and isolation from these groups. The data suggest a relatively passive style of board operations. Where member contributions are valued, where the role of the board is understood, where the agenda is relevant and substantial, where board members feel they have the authority and the resources to engage with the agenda, passive or token involvement is less likely. Active participation and lively debate is more likely. The boards need to reflect on their style and to evaluate if their relative passivity is a positive or negative measure of their operations, reflecting a job being done well, or the opposite.

How the board organises its work, how it manages itself in order for the work to be done, how it shares information, how its agenda is developed, are factors that influence its orientation. The data report the lack of involvement of many members with these processes and with the work of the board. The contribution of each member should go beyond just attending meetings, and discussing, debating, and deciding issues, to investment of time and effort in activities such as data collection, sub-committee work, preparation and presentation of reports between meetings. What board members do is as important as what they say. On the basis of the corporate nature of the boards, and the consequence responsibility that devolves to each member, assigning tasks related to critical areas of the board's strategic role to each board member is a means of encouraging involvement and active participation. The formal board meeting might be augmented by other types of group activity that involve the members, and that would allow information to be exchanged outside the formal meeting, thus a'lowing the meeting to focus on decisions more than is currently the practice. According to Korsgaard et al. (1995, p. 62), the processes used "affect the commitment, attachment and trust of individual team members." More interactions between members deepen their involvement, understanding, and interest. It also encourages commitment, and increases emotional investment. The more active the involvement of members in the board process, the more likely it is that their sense of control, and ultimate ownership of the outcomes, will improve.

The reported orientation is also a factor of responsiveness (Zeigler, Jennings and Peak, 1974; Zeigler and Tucker, 1978; Danzberger et al., 1986). Responsiveness to stakeholders is promoted as a core objective for local school management structures. Responsiveness implies that the school is open to being influenced by interested parties.

8.2.4 Do boards, in the perception of the members, communicate with, respond to, and involve their constituencies?

Broadly based relationships with the stakeholder constituencies are likely to enhance their sense of participation, encourage their involvement, and make for decisions that reflect their views and needs. The role of the nominees is to bring the points of view of their nominators, as well as their expertise, to serve the broader interests of the school and the students. The data show that, once appointed, the boards have limited contact, as boards, with their stakeholders and, except for teacher nominees, the majority of board nominees have limited contact about their responsibilities with their nominators. This suggests that the views and needs of lay stakeholders are not effectively represented at board level since, in the absence of formal contact and consultation processes, their nominees are not in a position to reflect their views. This, for practical purposes, leaves the initiative with the professionals. A board culture that accepts professional dominance, while it can lead to a board providing a mantle of legitimisation for its actions, means also that it abrogates its true role (Kerr, 1964). All else being equal, it may also serve to lessen the influence of the parent nominees, in particular, since, in many instances, they do not have an organised constituency outside the board on whose behalf they can speak authoritatively. The parents appear to be the least influential of the constituencies at the level of the board. It also lessens the influence of the board since the board has not harnessed a major resource that it could call on for support. The more closely the board members relate to their constituencies, the more they legitimise the work of the board and the school, the more influence they are likely to have on the board processes, and the less likely the possibility of professional or any other form of sectional dominance. It also affects the board's credibility.

The credibility of the board hinges on its ability to reflect the concerns as well as the knowledge and understanding of its constituent groups in its decisions. There was little evidence in the data of a commitment to involve the constituencies, even at the minimum level of establishing and maintaining contact and sharing information. The apparent lack of urgency, particularly among parent and trustee nominees, in addressing the issue of their relative isolation from their nominators suggests that they have been socialised into an "elite/nominee" board culture that does not see interaction with constituencies as a priority. The lack of urgency among the constituency groups in initiating or maintaining contact with their nominees and the boards suggests a lack of interest, or disillusionment, or a failure to see the boards as relevant to their needs. This lack of urgency does not necessarily suggest that either parents or the trustees have lost interest in the school, or the values the board structure is meant to promote. It does call into question the credibility and the legitimacy of the boards in situations where those on whose behalf they are meant to function are effectively not involved or ignored. Of itself, regular contact between board nominees and their constituencies may not be of substantial benefit if the boards are spending their time on micro-management issues. Both the boards and the constituencies have rights and responsibilities to each other in relation to the school. The stakeholder constituencies have a right to be consulted, to be informed, and to have due influence. It is a responsibility of the board to communicate with its constituencies and to involve them. Approaching the issue from the perspective of rights and responsibilities could help to bring clarity to the issue and move it forward in the interests of democracy and transparency. If they work together, the school is the main beneficiary. This aspect of board operations is as worthy of external auditing as its financial management.

The nature and the extent of the relationships between nominators and nominees are factors in determining the locus of power on the board (Kogan et al., 1984; Pascal, 1986; Thody, 1990). If the board as an instrument of local partnership is to function effectively, not just the board, but also the board constituencies and the wider school community, need to understand the responsibilities of the board, and their role as participants in the board processes. The greater the interest among the constituency groups in the board process, the greater the likelihood that their nominees will be obliged to adopt strong positions on the boards in response to the wishes of their constituencies at the level of the board. Reform efforts in most of the jurisdictions discussed in chapter two focus on giving lay members, and parents in particular, real power over curriculum and policy in schools. Partnership cannot exist if one party is weak or dependent on the other parties. Boards need to develop a framework of values and processes that encourage and support parental involvement. This framework should make the board and its processes more "user-friendly" and transparent to parents, thus making it easier for them to understand and monitor what is happening in the school, and at the level of the board.

Encouraging an active parents' association is the school and forming direct links between the association and the board could be starting points in creating and promoting greater mutual awareness between boards and parents. There are indications that the parents and other groups are claiming their democratic rights at the expense of the representative processes provided by the board. As a school principal working in a school with a board of management and a parents' association, one has become conscious of an increase in the number of approaches from individual and occasionally groups of parents with special interests and needs that relate to significant issues of school policy. In most cases, they seldom or never brought these issues to either parent nominees on the board or their association. Many of the issues raised never reach the board of management through the parent nominees. This phenomenon has the potential for greater conflict between groups, less clearly defined processes, and more pressure on school administrations.

The ongoing education reform movement seeks to broaden the educational agenda beyond the immediate issues of schools and their immediate stakeholders to encompass a wider social vision. Schools operate in the context of local communities and through their educational programmes are having greater contact than heretofore with their local community. It was reported in the study that issues in the wider community environment of the school did not have a priority at board

meetings. The general picture that emerged from the data was of boards that appeared to be closed groups concerned primarily with immediate school matters. While parents can represent their communities, their primary interest is likely to be their children, more than wider community concerns that impact on the schools, or on which the schools impact. There is an argument for the extension of the overall board membership to include a member or members from the wider community, though not necessarily from the business community as is often advocated. Social vision is broader than economic interest, and in arguing for a more broadly based board, the purpose is to ensure that the broader social vision is represented on the board. Voluntary secondary trustees argue that they try to ensure that their nominees include representatives of the community being served by the school and people with expertise in areas relevant to the efficient functioning of the school (CMRS, 1993). Of itself, this measure is not sufficient, as it does not give the initiative to the community being served to nominate whoever it wishes. As the discussion on macro-systems in chapter two of this study indicates, the need for broader community involvement is also rooted in the needs of the student. There is a greater awareness that these needs are complex and require an integrated response through collaborative action from a wide variety of agencies and services. There is a role for the board of management in the complex and collaborative task of bridge-builder, linking school and local community in the interest of both, and in the service of students.

Positive working relationships and effective communications among the members and with the board constituencies are likely to be facilitated by effective board processes. While, according to the data, the board members agree that information and efficient communications are essential and generally present on the boards, in the light of the low levels of contact with stakeholders, they need to address the practical issues involved. The boards need to conceptualise why they wish to communicate, and what is to be communicated. They need to decide on the most appropriate communications medium to maintain contact with their constituents and to involve them. They need to be convinced of the value of the process. The confidentiality clause, under which board business is conducted, does not preclude communications with stakeholders. Good processes are also likely to facilitate positive relationships. There is evidence in the data that the board members work together in a climate of mutual goodwill, respect, trust and co-operation, and that such contact as there is with the stakeholder constituencies is cordial. The apparent high level of cordiality may indicate that the boards are closed entities. The dominance of educational professionals on the boards coupled with the low priority given to its educational agenda shows reluctance on the part of the

educators to discuss educational issues, and perhaps to justify educational decisions and practices. Boards need to address their cultures, their preconceptions and assumptions, and to ensure that they are equally welcoming to all their members. To do this, the boards need time, so the frequency of meetings and the use of other processes, such as board committees, through which the board members are involved in the management of the school are likely to be critical factors. They may also need occasional external facilitation and support, that can take an objective view of the board and its operations, to enable them identify the issues and concerns.

Accountability is also a form of communication. The board is expected to provide an effective mechanism through which stakeholders can present their legitimate concerns, inform and influence decision-making through their nominees, and hold the school to account. Already, the Department of Education and Science demands a variety of reports, and it requires the boards to account directly to it. There is need for a similar substantive and regular process of communications and responsiveness between the board and its other stakeholders, with resources provided to the board to facilitate the process. Through a process of consultation between all the parties, including the Department of Education and Science, it should be possible to develop a common reporting process that meets the needs of the different parties, and which does not duplicate work at the level of the school administration.

Board activities need to be integrated into a suite of structures not only at macro-level within the system but also at micro-level within the school, and in this way be brought closer to the macro-political realities, and the realities of school life and their constituencies. A potential strategy for involving the constituencies is to ensure that the board concept is mirrored in the schools themselves in their processes, and through building relationships with parents at school level through dealing with issues of immediate relevance to them. In this approach both parents and teachers can to be involved with the school administration through regular general meetings and through committees or working groups. Such an approach has the potential to allow the stakeholders to engage with each other and to have real influence through giving them an opportunity to indicate to schools how the schools can be responsive to their needs. It gives parents and teachers an opportunity to engage with the mission of the trustees and the ethos of the school. The process of school development planning currently being developed in schools has the potential for this type of involvement. For this level of involvement to occur, the role of school administrations and staffs will need to be redrawn and supported. On-going and effective communications systems and contacts are factors of both responsiveness and accountability.

This approach has implications for board accountability. On-going and effective communications systems and contacts are factors of both responsiveness and accountability. Board responsiveness and accountability is not limited to the Department of Education and Science or to any one particular agency.

8.2.5 Is the board itself accountable, and does it hold its school accountable?

In the jurisdictions discussed in chapters two and three, there is a strong emphasis on educational standards and accountability. Boards of management and councils in those jurisdictions are presented as locally based democratic tools that can hold the professionals and the bureaucrats in the educational system to account through seeking from them reports of their activities on behalf of the school. Both approaches to accountability set out in chapter four linked it with responsibility. In the view of the board members, an element of local consultation and accountability, with which the majority of them were satisfied, had been introduced into the decision-making process at the level of the board of management. They recognised that they had a responsibility to account for their schools to the trustees, to Department of Education and Science and to their constituencies. There is accountability - extensive in some areas, limited in others - within the system. In the school/department relationship, the perception of accountability that comes through in the data equates it more with a bureaucratic/professional understanding than with an understanding that recognises the legitimacy of the school-community dimension. In practice, in the school/board accountability relationship, the form of accountability appears to be closer to consultation than answerability, except for administrative and bureaucratic matters such as finances and the management of resources. Boards need to reflect on their accountability in its many dimensions, how it is understood within the macro-systems within which they function, its meaning for them, how it can be practised to make their role more effective, and how it can be delivered to their stakeholders.

Though appointed by one body, *de facto* the principal accountability of the board is to another. Although nominated by the stakeholders and appointed by the trustees, the boards render greatest accountability to the Department of Education and Science. The majority of the community school board respondents, including trustee nominees, indicated that their primary accountability was to the Department of Education and Science. On the voluntary secondary boards, accountability was seen as due primarily to the trustees. A limited accountability was being demanded by and rendered to voluntary secondary trustees, and little accountability was being demanded by, or rendered to community board trustees, perhaps because it was not being requested. Because of the immediacy of the accountability requirements of the Department of Education and Science in the terms it required, the rights of the other parties were overshadowed to the extent that many board members did not recognise their obligations to these parties. In particular, the accountability relationships between the community school trustees and their boards were tenuous on many boards, maybe because the trustees had become relatively invisible or without authority in accountability terms. Boards need to identify their stakeholders, not just those immediately represented on the board, to prioritise them, and to consult them. The board gives expression to the fact that all share a responsibility for the well-being and the future of the school. This involves a change of mindset for the board as well as the stakeholders.

The focus in the Education Act (Ireland) (1998) is an accountable school managed by an accountable board of management within a system that is also accountable. The Act puts an onus on boards of management and school administrations to be increasingly accountable to the Department of Education and Science and the school community for greater efficiency and flexibility in the use of the human and material resources at their service. The boards are required to give attention to student learning, to set standards, and to monitor progress, as well as be accountable for financial and other resources. It is a form of accountability that holds the boards responsible within stated role parameters for their goals and for compliance with regulations handed down by the Department of Education and Science. According to the data, the generality of board members were not pro-active in monitoring their schools. Some board members saw this as indicating that the boards had not accepted their responsibility for controlling their schools, and holding them accountable. If accountability is accepted as a core value for the board, it needs to empower itself, its members, its constituencies and stakeholders, to seek accountability from each other. If the board has set a vision for the future, has set goals and objectives and performance standards for the school, and has determined operating modes and organisational structures, it has a framework for its monitoring role against which it can measure both board and school operations. The accountability role of the board mirrors its policy role (Carver, 1990).

Currently, changes can occur in the policies and procedures of the Department of Education and Science that impact on school, but with little real consultation with boards and schools. There is difficulty in reconciling a thrust towards democratic and participatory management styles at local level, and top-down hierarchical management styles in the relationship between the central and local levels. On the one hand, boards and their schools are being given a degree of autonomy, but on the other hand, there are increasing demands for bureaucratic accountability. Unless a working relationship that respects the two perspectives is agreed, it may end up in a battle between two sets of frustrations – a Department of Education and Science intent on having its requirements met, and schools intent on ensuring that their wishes have real influence. This may become a source of tension on the boards between members who may feel they have no choice but to be compliant, and those members who wish to be more assertive in ensuring that their position and their needs are respected. In the interests of all concerned, the boards need to be aware of their role, to defend their role, and to assert themselves in the role.

Boards must be aware that they have accountability for substantial matters. Calls for greater accountability are meaningless unless they are accompanied with the authority, resources, and the flexibility that will allow those accountable to respond. In general, the board members were satisfied with the extent of their authority, more so in the case of community school boards than in the case of the voluntary secondary school boards. They were less satisfied with their capacity to exercise their authority. To enhance this capacity, boards need infrastructure in the form of skills, knowledge, support, and understanding. The principals, in their capacity as board secretaries, indicated that the role was onerous and was growing more onerous. Along with considering what accountability means in practice, and how it might be enhanced in the interests of both the school and central bureaucracy, the capacity of the boards, their members, and their officers to meet existing and new demands needs to be considered. Boards need to identify their strengths and their constraints and the implications of these for change and accountability.

The findings on the role being exercised by the boards and the dictates of accountability suggest that they have a responsibility to assess their own contribution and performance. Without periodic assessment of its own performance in a climate where accountability is required of every other group, the board's capability to create a quality educational environment can be compromised, and its credibility undermined. The board has no more right to be above assessment of its performance than any element of the school it manages. Along with the board holding itself and its school accountable, there is also an argument for holding each member of the board accountable for his/her performance related to attendance, contributions to the business of the board in the form of information and proposals, co-operation, and maintaining links with nominators. According to Boone (1991, p.3), a first step to "improving the performance of others is by improving the performance of the board itself."

Accountability is essentially about rights to information. Currently, the dominant calls for information and greater accountability come from outside the local management context. Standards and reports are essential and must be met. Over-demanding standards and reporting requirements from any source, or for their own sake, that go beyond the capacity of a board made up of voluntary members to meet, are likely to have the effect of dulling enthusiasm, and generating cynicism and frustration. A single accountability template applied across the system may destroy the variety and diversity within schools. Demands for greater accountability from any level must not be allowed to destroy the legitimate autonomy of the schools relative to the other parties within the system and local accountabilities. This autonomy does not mean isolation either locally or within the macro-system. There is a danger that accountability will become an end rather than a means to an end. The boards need to identify their several mutual accountabilities, to address them, and to establish mutual expectations both inside the local management context, and with the Department of Education and Science. This process will indicate the level of commitment there is to partnership and democratic principles among all the parties. Accountability and democracy are intertwined. Without accountability, there cannot be democracy.

8.2.6 Are the boards participatory and democratic in their ethos and activities and do they make decisions in a democratic manner?

In the context of the relationship between the stakeholders, the practice of democracy can mean different things depending on their orientation. The data suggest that within the structures, the professionals tend to consult the boards about a proposed course of action. The board, having been consulted and informed, and given the opportunity to debate the course of action, accepts it, and takes responsibility for it. In particular, the principals retain substantial control of key areas relating to the board's responsibilities. They exert substantial influence through proposing policies, setting agendas, managing difficult issues, disseminating information, and implementing decisions. Parent nominees, on the whole, were satisfied with the boards as they were operating, and agreed that they made the management of the school more democratic. The majority view among the teacher nominees indicated that they were satisfied with their boards. Of the nominee groups, the teachers were in least agreement that the board dealt with the educational agenda, or with issues of concern to them. Trustee nominees were generally positive and supportive of the view that the boards' processes were democratic and participatory. The generality of the responses suggested that internally the boards were being responsive to the needs of their

members, involved the members in the decision-making process, and promoted a culture of collaboration in their ethos and operations. Board members participated in board meetings more through questioning and listening than proposing policies, or proposing items for the agenda. In the perception of the board members, communications on the boards were good. Members were able to express and honour individual points of view. Personal agendas did not prevail, and members were able to arrive at a consensus on what was best for their schools. Consensus was the most practised decision-making process.

Conflict was not overt in the board decision-making process. The general picture across both types of boards was of boards on which there was a good group spirit, openness and trust, and a sense of cohesiveness among members. This appeared to translate into generally conflict free meetings, where there was willingness among members to compromise on issues, and where decisions were reached by agreement more than by majority vote. There was little evidence of serious conflict related to issues on the boards, though members did indicate that there were disagreements. While there were disagreements, the unity and the focus of the board was maintained. Board decisions were generally unanimous among members operating out of a nominee more than a representative stance. Procedural problems existed related to time, information flows, the limited participation of some members, and a tendency to micromanage. There was no strong view overtly indicated in the data among parent or trustee nominees that suggested that they were dissatisfied with their access to the boards, or suggesting that the boards were undemocratic in their ethos and activities. While the general majority finding supported the view that the boards were operating in a non-conflictual manner through a "sacred/elite" form of operation that gave equal access to all, there were indications that this was not the universal experience.

Although the reported thrust of board members was towards consensus and the overall good of the school in decision-making, the low level of conflict reported raise suspicions about the quality of the consensus process used on the boards. Active boards in touch with interested constituencies live in the midst of ongoing diversity, and accordingly in the midst of potential conflicts that arise from the diversity of insight, thought and action, among their constituent groups. When diversity of opinion, conflict, and ongoing, serious and in-depth discussion on a broad agenda find little room for expression at the board meeting, as it may in a culture characterised by cordiality, the common good can be put in jeopardy. The generally positive picture of board operations and the apparent cordiality on the boards between the members and in the transaction of board business need to be measured against the limited role being exercised by the boards and the underlying tensions reported. The dominant style on the board appeared to be reactive. Board members responded to issues substantially defined for them. They evaluated issues and agreed to possible solutions more than they initiated issues or proposed solutions. Boards did not engage with substantial areas of their agenda, especially those related to education and this was of concern to some. The overall decision-making process that allows a leading role to the principal and/or chairperson in determining the board agenda, and in presenting policy items to the board, suggests that the board does not operate according to a participatory style of decision-making. Successful management of conflict assumes that there is a willingness to learn, to engage with core issues, to carry issues to a conclusion, and to be objective in discussion.

The picture that emerges is of boards that are participatory to a limited extent only. While there is a degree of participation, it appears to be superficial and likely to be ultimately ineffective in terms of the ideal role for boards. The levels of participation and involvement of the board nominees suggest that the boards act more as consultative and advisory bodies that legitimise the current practices in the school, than as leadership bodies. Even at this level, they fail to involve the constituencies in an adequate manner. Boards need to devise effective ways of getting reflective and critical evaluations of their decisions and actions. They need to probe for alternatives in addressing issues, and broaden their decision-making base by consulting with their constituencies. Board members need to be aware of their responsibilities as nominees of these constituencies and their accountability both to them and to the board, and to take initiatives to improve board-constituency linkages. The boards need to address their corporate responsibility in this area.

In accordance with their mandate, boards should be aiming to bring about a democratic school community that recognises the legitimate rights of all parties to have substantive input into decision-making about significant school issues. In the board process as reported, the professionals had a central role, in particular the principal through his/her influence on the agenda and the flow of information, in the decision processes, and their outcomes. There did not seem to be a desire among the lay members to challenge that reality. While there was dissatisfaction with the perceived dominance of a professional agenda at meetings, in general, parent and trustee nominees on both boards were supportive of the role of the principals and the teacher nominees. The realisation of democratic values on the boards requires them to challenge dominance by any interest. Unless the boards clearly define their roles and the responsibilities of their members, the

additional work required of them under the Education Act (Ireland) (1998) is likely to make them more reliant on the professionals. If particular groups are perceived as exercising control or operating from a basis of undue influence or from a position of self-interest, this may result in others reverting to an opposing stance on issues, and their own self-interest. The positive relationships on the boards and their satisfaction with their powers provide constructive starting points and a context for the development of the role of the board. Good communications and information flow on the boards support positive relationships and member involvement.

8.2.7 Is access to information open or restricted?

The board structure provides a framework for the different stakeholders to communicate and share information about the school and how their constituencies view it. Without adequate and relevant information, the board members will have difficulty influencing the decision-making processes of their boards. In the view of the majority of the nominees, the current information process on their boards was sufficient for their needs. The majority of the nominees indicated that they were comfortable enquiring about the school, that all categories had equal access to information, that they used sources other than the board meeting to get information, and that they had sufficient understanding of the technical information needed to manage the school. The professionals on the boards, particularly the principals, were the primary sources for information about the school. By virtue of their role, they had a substantial control over the flow of formal information to the board. Their knowledge of the full range of school concerns put them in a position to shape the kinds of information their boards received. Their influence on the agenda process put them in a position to determine the matters the board discussed. The trustee and parent nominees also indicated that they provided information to the board. Since parent nominees in particular had difficulty in maintaining regular formal contact with their nominators, it was unlikely that they could fully reflect the views of their nominators, and be channels for information between them and the board

One of the values of lay involvement on boards is that lay members are in a good position to take a broader perspective on the school. Board members who are actively involved in the day-to-day matters of the school can develop personal ties and agendas that obscure the broader view of the school. Given the level of dependence by members on board meetings for information, to the extent that issues were not raised and debated at the meetings, lay members in particular were not fully or adequately informed about their schools. To the extent, that information from any constituency was not available to the board, the board was not informed about important dimensions of the school. To the extent that the board professionals controlled the flow of information, the process was not open and unrestricted, and was likely to engender a sense of dependency among the lay board members on the professional board members. These factors limited the capacity of the board to get an objective view of their school. The limited sharing of information by lay board members suggested that there was also limited involvement and participation.

The data suggest that information sharing is an important part of the business of a meeting, but to the extent that it becomes the primary focus of the meeting, it indicates a difficulty in the board. The practice of using the board meeting as an instrument for sharing information suggests that new information is made available to members for the first time at the time of the meeting. This limits the effective use of the information as it allows little time for reflection and evaluation, particularly if the information is substantial. Where the primary source of the information is the principal and the teacher nominees, it points to the absence of formal on-going mechanisms for disseminating information, or a lack of a broader involvement by the members with their role, and a dependence on the professionals. If the focus of the board is on the principal's report and the administrative items brought to the board, the board is less likely to have time to engage in systematic discussion of issues related to the mission of the school. The literature indicated that many boards spent more time on plans and reviews of recent activities than on evaluation and issues of purpose. Undue use of the board meeting to disseminate information is a poor use of the limited time available to the board for its policy role. This is not to suggest that the board members do not have a right to use the board meeting to share information and to ensure that information relating to the school and needed by the board for its planning is provided. It is a matter of balance. Many information items can be communicated to board members outside of the meetings.

The level of satisfaction indicated by the board members with the sharing of information, and their access to information, may be linked to the role they see for themselves and the level of partnership on the boards. The use of the board meeting as a forum for the dissemination of information suggests that the boards serve in an advisory more than in a policy-making capacity. The boards need to assess their information processes both internally, and between them and their constituent groups, and to establish processes such as delegation and the use of sub-committees in order to balance the role of the professionals. They also need to establish that it is the

responsibility of each member to be an effective distributor of the information coming from the board, and also to be a receiver of information to pass on to the board. The flow of information and communications within the board are critical elements in developing partnership, in creating a sense of involvement, and in the formation and maintenance of relationships based on openness and trust. They also indicate the dissemination of power within the board – whether the distribution of power is a genuine distribution, or just a symbolic gesture. The type of information provided to the board and how it is provided can effectively determine whether it directs the attention of the board to issues of administration or to issues of policy. This supports the importance of, and the necessity for, a transparent agenda-setting process. The top-down information flow indicated in the data is suggestive of a hierarchical rather than a participatory management structure. Good information processes promote healthy partnerships. Boards should make their information needs known in explicit terms to those who provide it, in order to increase the probability that they will be better informed on issues of substance and relevance to them.

8.2.8 Do the professional and lay members on the boards of management function in a relationship that can be characterised as a partnership?

To function effectively, the board needs cohesiveness and a sense of confidence as a group. If a member or a sub-group habitually feels isolated or excluded in the relationships or the processes of the board, this takes from the overall effectiveness of the board. The relationship between the professional and lay board members is one aspect of board cohesiveness and is indicative of the level of partnership and collaboration on the boards. The general picture that emerges from the data suggests that there is relative harmony on the boards, and equality of access and influence for all board members. At the level of the responses to the questionnaire items, the data suggest that neither lay nor professional groups were dominant in the relationship, though the lay members did indicate that the professional agenda dominated board proceedings. In the comments of both principals and board members, there were indications of tension in the relationship.

The literature indicates that principals play a central role in the effectiveness of individual boards. The role of the principal in the professional/lay relationship is rooted in his/her professional competencies, as well as his/her responsibilities as principal to the school, and, in the majority of cases, secretary to the board. He/she links the policy and administration levels of the management function. He/she is the instructional as well as the administrative leader in the school. The style

adopted by the principal is a central factor in shaping the dynamics of the board-management relationship. The data support the view that the principals enjoy a strong leadership role vis- \dot{a} -vis their boards. They set the style of the board-management relationships by the kind of issues they bring to the board, by the quality and appropriateness of the information they provide, by their reports, and by their responses to board members' questions. In the view of many of the nominees, the decision-making processes tended to be determined by the principal. While the boards were willing to overrule him/her, he/she exercised a stronger influence on the board that any of the nominee categories, particularly in the case of the community boards. The principals, in general, provided substantial leadership to their boards.

Generally, the boards expressed confidence in their principals. They appreciated the role they were playing and the support they were providing to the boards. There did not appear to be a difficulty in the delineation of roles and responsibilities between the boards and the principals, except in the case of some voluntary secondary principals who believed that their boards were not taking their share of the management responsibilities. The relationship between the boards and their principals appeared to be more harmonious on the community school boards than on the voluntary secondary boards. The majority response from the voluntary secondary principals suggested that they expected unquestioning support from their boards. It also suggested a limited understanding of the role of the board and a lack of receptivity to the position of the board members. The role of the board is to be vigilant, to maintain a broad vision and a critical stance. Principals have a need and a right to direction and supervision from their boards as well as a critical forum that supports them and holds them accountable.

The expected style of leadership in the context of board management is shared. This style of leadership is concerned with creating the conditions that enable others to achieve their goals, rather than setting rules for them. The comments of respondents suggested that some principals continued to practice or to act out of a top-down authoritarian approach to leadership, and some nominees acted out of an agenda based on self-interest. Some of the lay board members believed that for some professional members - principals and teacher nominees - the primary goal of improved student learning was secondary to promoting their own professional interests. In the board setting, these approaches inhibit genuine stakeholder involvement in the shared decision-making that ought to accompany partnership. Because of the failure of the board to exercise a shared strategic approach to leadership, and the level of professional influence on the board, the

expertise of the board members - particularly lay members - remained dormant, and their varying perspectives on school-related issues were not sufficiently reflected in board deliberations.

The primary responsibility of the principals in the context of their seed documents is to manage the teaching and learning programmes in the school, to manage curriculum development and delivery, and to manage the physical and resource environment of learning in the interest of student achievement. In the current environment of Irish education, the promotion and management of change is also a central concern. A key function of the principal is to promote education through the management and leadership of the teaching staff and the educational programmes provided within a purposeful learning environment. The ethos of management and of the role of the principal is changing. There is an implication in the data that some principals have not come to terms with the fundamental change in their schools and in their own role -achange that requires new forms of leadership from them. The literature relating to the role of the principal underlines the need for extensive skills in the area of facilitative leadership, the management of change focused on school improvement, the involvement of staff and stakeholders, instructional and curricular leadership, the maintenance of inclusive processes and relationships, and knowledge. It seems unrealistic to expect a person recruited directly from a teaching position to assume the role of principal without extensive professional development and training that includes practical experience of a management role. It may also be necessary for principals to differentiate clearly and deliberately between their primary role as principals and their role as secretaries to their boards.

Boards can help facilitate better decisions and can be valuable tools for engaging the talents, the enthusiasm and the commitment of more stakeholders than more hierarchical traditional structures. To do this, as well as strong and effective principals, boards need strong and independent chairpersons capable of mobilising board members, and encouraging their participation. Board leadership is primarily the responsibility of the chairperson. The challenge for the chairperson is to maximise the likelihood that the decisions of the board of management will be appropriately participatory, informed and sensitive to the internal board and school as well as the external environments. He/she plays a role in ensuring that the meetings are effectively organised, that the board stays focused on the issues, that the information needed for planning is provided, that all members are encouraged to participate and that their voices are heard. To ensure that the board and the school operate in harmony and that their activities are co-ordinated, it is necessary for the chairperson and the principal to have close working relationships. There are

concerns in the data about the way the role is currently conceptualised and being exercised on the boards. There are allegations that the role of chairperson in some cases is too controlling and intrusive. In other cases, it is alleged that there is too close a relationship between the chairperson and the principal. Installing boards and expecting them and their officers to function without substantial relevant training and resources is unrealistic, and is likely to lead to failure or at least to unsatisfactory practice. The role of the chairperson needs to be addressed and its terms of reference specified on some boards, with a view to ensuring a clear understanding of the role and its responsibilities, as well as a transparent relationship between the chairperson and the principal. The skills appropriate to the role of a skilled chairperson are not the prerogative of any one group of board nominees. Because of its importance in enabling participation, the role should not be linked with control or balance of power on the boards.

Lay involvement is no longer a controversial issue in education reform. With involvement comes responsibility both to nominators and the board. Board members, both lay and professional, are expected to support the work of the board in a collaborative manner by sharing their ideas and concerns, by listening to the ideas and concerns of their fellow members, and working with them to reach decisions that meet the needs of the school. As nominees of their nominating groups, they are responsible for communicating the views of their constituencies to the board, and the decisions of the board to their constituencies. The findings indicate willingness among parent nominees to be involved and goodwill towards the boards. They also indicate that parent nominees in particular have lower levels of participation in the deliberations of the board and less influence than other groups on the board processes. They appear to be underused and relatively isolated from playing a full role. Parents are in a good position to know their schools. Through their children, or directly, they interact with them on an almost daily basis. The boards need to reflect on their own practice and to takes initiatives to empower and involve parents. Parents also need to take their own initiatives.

Curriculum issues and the general educational agenda are at the heart of what the school is about. The operation of school councils in the United States suggests that councils rarely become involved in core issues of curriculum. The current study had a finding along similar lines. The finding could relate to how curriculum might be discussed effectively by the board given the level of prescription that pertains around curriculum. It could also indicate a professional reluctance to allow the board to discuss curriculum matters. The argument, or the perception, that the boards have little power to deal with the core issues of curriculum and instruction and that there is little point in the boards engaging in a debate about such issues is not convincing. There are substantial issues relating to overall subject and programme provision within the school, how the curriculum is organised and delivered, how it responds to special needs of pupils, and how options within the curriculum are managed that fall within the control of the board. These issues are of interest to all the stakeholders. The reason why curriculum issues do not get greater consideration at board meetings is more likely to relate to an inherited culture on boards that leaves these issues to the professionals, or reluctance to raise these issues, than to lack of board powers to deal with them. If this is the case, it supports the view that the primary role being played by the boards is to legitimise the school rather than to engage in substantive debate around core issues. To fulfil their role, all the stakeholders need to understand the curriculum. They need to develop their own competencies and confidence to deal with curriculum and learning issues, and to engage with these issues in an informed manner that can stand up to public scrutiny. While the professional educators are central to the work of the school, they can no longer work alone. At the same time, involving teachers and using their expertise in decisions about their work ought to be valued in its own right, as much as giving parents and others greater involvement in their schools.

While the professional/lay relationship on the boards is cordial and positive, it needs to be substantially developed. Board members need to be empowered to address their responsibilities more effectively, particularly in the area of curriculum leadership. A sense of competence and belief that their contributions are welcomed and carry influence is likely to increase the confidence of all the members, their willingness to become more involved, and to share responsibility.

8.2.9 Are board members prepared for their role and are their on-going training and support needs met?

Adopting new legislation, setting up structures, initiating changes at macro level and hoping they will trickle down to local level is not enough. Exhorting, persuading, advising board members that they must do better, that they must be involved in the management of the school, and prescribing solutions for them may have little positive effect. Without adequate preparation and training, they are likely to assume accepted authoritarian or passive roles, and to think in narrow or self-interest terms rather than in interest of the whole school. Currently, there is training provided for board members through the formal or informal induction processes on the boards, and through different associations and agencies. The data suggest that in the perception of the

respondents, particularly lay nominees, this training is insufficient or inadequate. Some members received no training. Incorporating training into the business of the board through devoting a regular meeting time to it is one strategy that would address the particular training needs of individual boards. More generic training could be provided through regional or national seminars. The more generic macro training is necessary to provide boards with a broader perspective than that of the particular board. It may help counter the current isolation of many boards and board members. The schools are judged by their effectiveness. That effectiveness is influenced by how they are managed, and the qualities the board members bring to their task. Developing knowledgeable board members who understand their role, and who can manage their school better, is an investment in school effectiveness.

The process of training will also need consideration in order to facilitate all board members equally. Training is regarded as critical in preparing all the members to be active participants in the decision-making process, in building a capacity for change, and in developing a shared knowledge base on the boards. It is necessary in order to nurture a sense of trust and cohesiveness among the members and to prepare them for working together towards the common goal of managing the school in the interests of the students. Well-prepared boards are more likely to be in a position to share accountability and responsibility for decisions made at meetings. The lack of engagement on the boards with core elements of their role indicated in the data suggests that there is a need for boards to review their purpose and to reset their goals. In the absence of training that opens up the potential of the board, members tend to err on the side of caution in exercising their role. It is easier to understand the limits of the role than its potential authority. In this situation, the change brought about by the board in the management of the school may be superficial, serving to change the power base from a single manager to the board without any change in the culture or climate of management. A strong sense of purpose and shared goals are likely to serve to motivate and instil pride in boards, A sense of purpose is also likely to create a sense of confidence, a greater willingness to accept responsibility, and to exercise their new authority. Fears of overstepping the role may limit its exercise and result in board responsibilities falling by default to others.

There are different views about the focus for training - should it help promote team building and develop problem-solving skills, or should it concentrate on providing information? Most of the training currently provided relates to technical aspects of school management. Learning about these is important for board members as it provides a base of knowledge, but it does not address

or provide an understanding of the larger picture – the purpose of the board and its focus on the student and the school. Chait et al. (1993, p. 48) found that effective boards had an "... explicit commitment to *corporate* accomplishment and a *communal* dedication to the collective aims of the board." Focusing on technical issues may serve to encourage a board to focus on micro-management and detract from its policy focus and its primary purpose. Munn and Holroyd (1989), stressing the need for practicality, identified relevance, brevity, whole board provision as well as individual member training, and credible trainers as key characteristics of the forms of training identified by board members.

New boards will have little experience working as a team and operating as a group that is responsible to a number of different constituencies. They need skills and strategies that help them in setting agendas, in involving their constituencies, in holding effective meetings, in providing feedback to others. They need help in understanding and managing change and in understanding their role and that of their boards. Such group and process skills are necessary to ensure that meetings are productive, that decisions are based on adequate input, and that once made they are communicated to all concerned. Board members need to be helped through professional training, not commanded. The findings of this study suggest boards themselves and the Department of Education and Science should give greater priority to substantial school board development. Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) argue that one-shot training for individuals is ineffective at bringing about long-term, organisational change. They go further and suggest that for change to occur both boards and individuals must also take the initiative, otherwise they will be left powerless (p.353). Board members have a right to a thorough orientation on joining the boards. Trustees, boards, and their associations need to agree on the approach to and the content of this orientation. Board members should also be involved in planning their own training rather than being passive recipients. The form of training that will provide a vision for teaching and learning will differ from the traditional seminar/workshop which has as its goal the dissemination and understanding of information.

8.3 CONCLUSIONS

The focus of this study was the perception of board members, as nominees of the primary stakeholders, and the school principals of the effectiveness of their boards as instruments of participatory management. The change in school management represented by the board of management was intended to promote shifts in roles and relationships away from the traditional

bureaucratic model of school management to a more open, participatory model. In the traditional model, the trustees, as owners of the school, managed the school through an individual manager with little reference to other interests apart from the Department of Education and Science. Parents were mostly uninformed about the school, and were isolated from decision-making and the operations of the school. In the new model, parents are expected to act as colleagues in planning and decision-making and partners in management. Teachers, who were also relatively isolated from significant decision-making within their schools, are expected to interact with parent and trustee nominees in a setting in which ideals and concerns are shared. The role of the principal has also changed from that of a bureaucratic enforcer of rules and regulations to that of a team member in a collegial relationship in decision-making with parent, teacher, and trustee nominees. The change in roles requires new skills and capabilities. The new management structure requires a board that acts cohesively and independently, that has a comprehensive understanding of its role, that is capable of holding their schools accountable as well as being accountable itself, that is even-handed in its management and in the access it gives to the stakeholders. It requires a board that is well-informed about, and sensitive to the needs and the particular circumstances of its school. The data suggest that while there is some distribution of power and influence, there is little evidence that substantial changes have occurred, either in the exercise of teachers' professional expertise or in parental participation through the boards of management. In the literature the boards seldom realise their aspirations.

Gamage (1993) in his study of Victorian school councils in Australia, and Malen and Ogawa (1990) in their study of such councils in the United States presented generally similar summaries of their respective sets of findings. They suggested that the councils served primarily as vehicles through which individuals could share information, air complaints, vent concerns, diffuse potentially contentious issues, minimise irritations, address recurrent problems. The summaries suggest that the boards were benign institutions more akin to clubs than decision-making groups. Macbeth (1990, p.5), writing about boards in Scotland, considered that a board could choose its own fate to a substantial degree. It could be active or inactive, deal with education or with side issues, communicate extensively or minimally, respond to concerns of parents or ignore them, hold the school accountable or not, support teachers or not. Golby (1990) considered Macbeth's position to be overstated and theoretical. He suggested that what boards actually did was a product not of considered choice, but more of an educated custom and practice within a broad and an often hazy understanding of legislative and other purposes. Similar concerns are present in all the studies. Din (1997) indicated problems being faced by the Kentucky councils. Among these

were lack of support and involvement from school staff, lack of time for their duties, many parents too busy to get involved, council membership lacking continuity, principal dominance, lack of curriculum focus, and slow processes. The data in this study echo the findings of Gamage, Malen and Ogawa, the conclusions of Golby, some of the problems identified by Din, and substantially confirm the findings of the case study (Mungovan, 1994) that prompted this research.

According to the case study, the professionals, influential persons, or groups on the board substantially influenced policy and decision-making. The board appeared to legitimise the policy recommendations of the principal, and did not adopt an independent stance relative to the school administration. In practice, the board took greater interest in administrative issues than in issues of policy, and pragmatism rather than planning characterised operations at the level of the board. The board and the members, apart from the teacher nominees, were generally unresponsive to their constituency groups, and had little public accountability. While the latitude to govern allowed by the Department of Education and Science to the local discretion of boards was limited, for the most part the board, while it had introduced new parties into the management of the school, had not substantially changed the traditional patterns of power and control in the school. While the board had an inherent potential to be an effective manager of the school, and to promote partnership and participation among the primary stakeholders, for the most part, it did not manage to the extent of its potential. Local influence on the core operations of the school through the formal structures of the board remained minimal.

Both the case study and the current study indicate that the boards did not deliberately choose to act according to any particular model of management. In terms of the models for board operations set out in chapter three, they operated in an advisory and supportive capacity as trustee/elite bodies rather than as policy groups, or according to an accountability model. Many of the board members, particularly the lay members, approached their involvement as a way to get information, and to provide a service, more than to make policy. Nevertheless, in their view, they saw themselves providing a useful service, and saw their boards providing a worthwhile forum. In their view the existence of the board had made the management of the school more democratic.

Though the general picture presented in the study points up difficulties, there are also signs of hope. In general, the relationships between the board members, irrespective of nominee category,

on the boards were positive, as was their experience of being board members. All categories of membership indicated goodwill and openness, a commitment to the overall good of the school, and a willingness to put this above other considerations. Board meetings seemed to be generally free of conflict and characterised by willingness among members to compromise on issues. In the view of the members, the boards were serving to make the management of the schools more democratic. While the board members perceived themselves and their boards to be effective managers of their schools within their understanding of their roles, they realised that there was room for improvement. Board members were conscious of their need for further training. In practice, the boards were operating out of a limited understanding of their role. Their failure to exercise a more comprehensive role appeared to relate to their limited understanding of their role, and their failure to deepen that understanding, rather than to any lack of goodwill. While the boards create the possibility of shared decision-making, they cannot guarantee that the parents, teachers, trustees, and principals will overcome traditional habits and adopt new practices, particularly if there is little or no motivation. A key question for boards is this: do they represent an improvement on what existed before, and conversely could alternative structures make for more effective management? In the view of the great majority of board members, the boards had made the management of the schools more democratic.

In both the community and voluntary secondary sectors, the current practice of the longer established boards has evolved over a period when they were expected to do little more than to play a relatively passive role in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. In the United Kingdom prior to the reassessments that took place in the 1970s and early 1980s, the boards of governors served primarily as sources of advice to the principals. Good boards did not bother the principal unduly, and good principals did not stretch their boards. The role of the boards evolved in response to public expectations, pressure from their central education departments, and following government legislation. In the United States and Canada the role of the school councils is generally described as consultative. In all the jurisdictions, the focus of the attention of school based councils and boards is shifting gradually as they are coming to appreciate their legal responsibilities, and in response to increasing demands for accountability. Their focus is moving from administrative issues to substantive educational issues, including curriculum and its delivery. They are becoming more policy oriented in their operations, and are taking a greater role in setting direction for the schools. Boards are coming to understand and to accept that they have responsibility and that everything about the school is their business because they are accountable for it. This accountability requires that the boards be informed about what is

happening in their schools. In the context of the changing board environment, the relationships between the parties on the boards are also evolving. In many cases procedures such as the development and on-going review of school plans are in place to ensure that this trend continues. For many boards, the concept of board evaluation is also new. Boards are being evaluated on how well they are meeting their obligations under the legislation and this has the effect of focusing their effort and attention. Similar developments are likely for boards of management in Ireland.

The Education Act (Ireland) (1998) has placed school boards of management in Ireland in a statutory setting, and makes provision for them in all schools receiving public funding. The Act gives parents, teachers, and patrons rights under law to be involved in the management of their schools. It sets out a relationship between the Department of Education and Science and the schools and their mutual accountabilities, and between schools and their stakeholders. It specifies processes such as school development planning that will involve the stakeholders with the school. At one level, the state has taken a single significant step. This step will need to be followed by many others if the policy, which it has espoused and set out in the Act, is to motivate a local response. What happens locally depends on local factors, not least the prevailing culture and the willingness of the partners to work collaboratively in the interests of the school. An accountability framework is not enough. To adopt a sporting metaphor, the state is one of the partners playing on the local pitch. If the principles of partnership are to be implemented, the other partners need to feel welcome, to be on the pitch willingly, to be trained, and to be playing to a set of rules that are mutually understood and accepted by all the parties. Policy statements need to be balanced with processes and resources that are both motivating and enabling for all the parties.

Do the boards of management live up to the high ideals set for them? The simple answer is that they do not. The data set out in this study suggest that the way the boards operate is at variance with the role envisaged for them in the Deed of Trust and the Articles of Management, and in the expectations set out in the literature for the democratic management of schools. The idealised model of the board as an instrument of participatory democracy for the governance of schools, though it may be conceptually sound, is not being realised in the general practice of the boards. This and other studies weaken any idealised perception or model of board. The studies show how complex an entity the board is, and the intricate internal and external environments in which it operates. At the same time, while the literature does identify many problems being experienced by boards, whether long established or newly formed, it also acknowledges the positive contribution these boards are making in their schools and within the macro-education structures in which they operate. There are questions relating to authority, power, and control, that need to be addressed at all levels within all the systems.

Chapter two identified a body of literature that was highly critical of the concept of the local management of schools, and the values that were seen as underpinning the current education reform movement as it was being realised in the different jurisdictions. Vigilant and active boards may be the most effective instruments available to schools to ameliorate those aspects of the reforms that are perceived as negative. Hartley (1994), while recognising that the concept of the self-managing school was in the ascendant, argued that there was an opportunity for boards to use the concept to maximise their control over education. Schools, rather than accepting competitive individualism, a core value driving the reforms in Hartley's view, had an opportunity to use the structures to help them operate out of a value system based on community and collective action. Using the structures, they could ensure that educational considerations were given priority over management and related considerations, and they could measure what they were being asked to do against the more acceptable values of equity, justice and democracy. According to Strike (1993, p. 266) the challenge was to make the schools into "local deliberative or discursive communities" based on the collective ideals and views of the school community. Sergiovanni (1994) argued for a revised understanding of leadership in schools that was based on the experience of schools as family and community rather than in organisational theory. He argued (p. 217) that in communities "the connection of people to purpose and the connection among people are not based on contracts but on commitments Communities are defined by their centres of values, sentiments, and beliefs that provide the needed conditions for creating a sense of we from a collection of Is." What Sergiovanni is calling for is a school where human values, rather than the demands of bureaucracy, get priority. The Education Act (Ireland) (1998) protects school ethos and provides a base for schools to address the issues raised by these criticisms, as they deem appropriate. The responsibility rests with the boards.

There is much in the findings of this study that supports the argument for an active organised intermediary structure between the boards and the Department of Education and Science. The purpose of such an intermediary structure would be to support local boards through providing resources, as well as help with strategic planning, rather than to promote central priorities or accountabilities. Some boards and their schools will prosper in a fully devolved system, some will find great difficulty due to lack of local support or resources or the ability, political or otherwise,

to influence a distant department. There is also much that suggests the need for a more active role for the trustees. By and large, the trustees have to act through the board of management. They rely on the board to ensure that their vision operates in the school. If it does not, then the board model is not working and is of little use to them. The trustees need to clarify at the level of their boards, particularly their community boards, what they wish to achieve through the boards, to put strategies in place to promote their goals, to evaluate the boards on an ongoing basis, and to support their boards. To be influential, they need to be active and visible.

The board of management offers an array of possibilities to a school and to a school community broadly based, democratic decision-making, responsiveness to the particular school environment, sensitivity to school ethos, widely based responsibility. They demand a great deal of time, skill, and commitment from board members and their schools in order to develop their potential as effective leaders for their schools. They require from their members an openness and willingness to learn, and to work as part of a group that serves and is accountable to a larger group - the school community. The board as a corporate entity has a duty to relate to its different constituents in that community. Trustee, parent, and teacher nominees need to invest time and effort in the board, and in ensuring that they are effective links with their respective constituencies. Principals should be open to sharing authority and responsibility. The professionals ought to be willing to support the board and share their expertise, while the lay members need to assert their right to knowledge and full participation, and to play a full role. The structure needs to be underpinned with appropriate resources. Quality induction, training, and ongoing support need to be in place. At the same time, since each school and school environment has its own characteristics, and is to that extent unique, while general guidelines are possible, there is no formula for the perfect board that is applicable in all school circumstances. A particular strength of the board of management is its potential to be responsive to local conditions and requirements. This responsiveness must also be represented in the relationships between the board and its trustees and the board and the Department of Education and Science. The values meant to underpin the board concept at local level should also inform that macro-system. The relationships between the system and the board ought to promote board empowerment as much as board accountability. The quality of these relationships should be a matter of primary concern to boards. Otherwise, the boards may become bureaucratic instruments of the Department of Education and Science, rather than bodies that facilitate the development of democratic values and that promote local preferences and local aspirations. Boards of management are not ends in themselves, but means to an end. Either as means or ends, their potential has not yet been realised.

Within its terms and limitations, the study has yielded useful data. It makes a contribution to knowledge about the operation of the boards of management used in the study, and their effectiveness from the perspective of the different categories of member. There is substantial evidence in the data regarding the perception of the respondents of the operations of their boards. The data differentiate the perspectives of the members regarding the operations of their boards and indicate areas where, in their view, the boards were more or less effective. This is set out in the analysis in chapters six and seven. The writer is satisfied that the stakeholder or constituency satisfaction approach to determining effectiveness is valid in the context of boards of management in Ireland at this point, and that the framework for the study has applicability for future studies into their operation. Using this approach helps to differentiate the different groups in terms of their experiences, and the attitudes, skills and abilities needed by them to meet their responsibilities. The overall experience of the study suggests to the writer that the questionnaire method used, though it had limitations, was satisfactory in the context of what was an initial and exploratory study. Future studies might use aspects of the general framework and probe them using a range of instruments including interviews, observations, and a systematic review of documentation generated for boards.

8.4 **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

In the Irish context, serious study of educational management is at a very early stage. In the area of boards of management and their operations in Ireland, proposing how they might build the gap between what they actually do and what they ought to be doing is venturing into the largely unknown. Looking at other countries and their experiences is useful, but the local experience has to be addressed as well. While there are common themes in the studies done across the jurisdictions reviewed in chapters two and three, and similar concepts, instruments, and occasionally the same researchers, the impact of the environments come through in the outcomes. They reflect particular preoccupations related to their historical, political and social contexts. The impact and the influence of a small group of core studies, based in the United States and the United Kingdom, on the literature relating to boards and councils in an educational setting have been particularly strong. This provides a basis for further research in the Irish context.

• The findings of the current study need to be tested further and deepened. They provide a basis for research into the perceptions and experiences of the constituencies of the boards and their

relationships with the boards, and whether or not the boards matter to them. How does each of the constituency groups nominating or electing the board members - parents, teachers, trustees view their boards? There is a claim in the general literature, relating particularly to the United Kingdom and Australia, that the enhancement of the role of the boards of governors is a greater priority for government than it is for parents and others. This is proposed as the reason why many of the boards are having difficulty in recruiting new members, and parent members in particular. There is a similar concern about parental involvement on councils and boards in the United States and in Australia. From the perspective of some respondents, teacher nominees in particular were seen as using their membership of the board to pursue their own sectional interests. In the light of the reported distance between the community school boards and their trustees, there is a need to determine the extent of this distance, why it has evolved, and what are the expectations of the trustees of their community school boards and *vice-versa*. While principals enjoyed substantial influence, a number of them, particularly secondary school principals, indicated dissatisfaction with their boards. The expectations that principals have of their boards and the cause of their reported dissatisfaction needs to explored. There is scope for many studies in the general area of the relationships between the boards and their constituencies.

- The findings indicate a lack of engagement by the boards with core issues of the operations of the school. Does the presence of the board make a difference? What school issues does the board deal with that bear fruit in better schooling for its pupils? Is the relationship between the board and the school hierarchical or collaborative? How conscious is the school at the level of pupil and the general staff of the presence of the board? While the literature indicates that a causal relationship has not been established between the existence of a board and improved student learning, it is reasonable to hypothesise that its presence makes a difference in the learning environment.
- In the structure of the secondary school boards, the principals are *ex-officio* secretaries to the boards. In the community school boards, the role of secretary can be filled by the principal or by the chief executive officer of the Vocational Education Committee associated with the school. In practice, the principal is the secretary to the board in most schools. The secretarial role, while it brings an additional unremunerated workload, gives greater control to the principal in pursuing the interests of the school directly with external agencies, including the Department of Education and Science. Having a direct relationship with external agencies rather than through another person effectively removes an administrative layer from the process. Being secretary strengthens

the role of principal in his/her relationship with the board in that he/she, along with being the administrative officer of the board in relation to the school, is also the board administrator. In the light of the findings on the role currently being played by the principals in exercising the dual role of principal/secretary, it is legitimate to enquire whether this dual role supports or promotes the reported passivity of the boards, particularly in relation to their administrative trust. In the light of comments made, by voluntary secondary nominees, the role of chairperson, and his/her relationships with the principal, are issues that need research to determine the independence or dependence of the offices on one another, and the impact of the relationships on board operations.

- The study indicated that consensus was the preferred style of board decision-making. It also indicated that, while there were disagreements on the boards, there was little overt conflict. Case studies based on the observation of boards, as well as interviews of board members, would help in determining whether or not the decision-making process follow a consensus-seeking style and whether or not conflict arises. If conflict arises, what type of issue generates the greatest conflict? How are conflicts resolved? The studies would also determine the extent to which the board members engage with the decision-making process. They would help to deepen the current level of understanding of board operations.
- The board operates between and relates to both the school and the Department of Education and Science. In recent times, the in-school management structure has been revised with an emphasis on a team approach involving the principal, deputy-principal(s), assistant principals, and "special duties" teachers. The Department of Education and Science is committed to decentralisation of some aspects of its administrative role to the boards and the schools. How do the boards perceive the role of the in-school management structure and the revised role of the Department of Education and Science, and how do they see the roles of these groups impacting on their role? At the level of the school, it might be that the enhanced in-school management would be in a better position to deal with most administrative matters than was the case heretofore. This could assist the boards that were preoccupied with such matters in giving primacy to policy issues. While the Department of Education and Science has placed accountability as the key component of its decentralisation thrust, it has also placed accountability at the heart of work of the board accountability for its school, and for its own processes. Effectively, the role of the board is being redefined. The issue at this point is how aware board members are of this, and what steps are they taking to prepare themselves for their revised role. A study conducted inside two years evaluating progress would help focus attention on how boards are responding to their revised roles.

8.5 CLOSURE

Today, boards of management within the parameters of their devolved mandate are faced with many challenges as they seek to anticipate the needs of their schools and their constituencies. They are expected to follow their legal mandate to act in the best interests of the school, react to increasingly competitive market forces, comply with government regulations, be fully accountable for good education and the ethos of their schools, care for and make appropriate use of resources and personnel. The demands of good management will only increase as they work to meet the expectations of their constituencies. Their expanded role will not be easy. There is a temptation for boards to become comfortable with success in their existing roles and to find solace in *clichés* such as, "If it isn't broken, don't fix it!" If the role proposed for the boards cannot be implemented, either the role itself or the boards need to be changed. While this study does not suggest that the current model of operations on the boards is broken, it does indicate that the boards need to reflect on and to develop their roles.