

Chapter 5

The cost of saving the Jewish community schools

This chapter explores the different understandings and perceptions among stakeholders as to why and how the restructuring of the Jewish community schools occurred. It analyses the responses to two separate research questions. The first question investigates stakeholders' understanding as to why the restructuring occurred, how they heard about it, what the outcomes to date were, as well as their role in the process. The second question investigates stakeholders' expectations and concerns with respect to the restructuring and their experiences of the process. The stakeholders' experiences and stories provide a means of capturing the complexity of the restructuring and clarify the different levels of meaning that the change held for them.

In Chapter 3 I discussed the ideological, financial and managerial background to the restructuring. In this chapter I will show that there was no common understanding among stakeholders as to the purpose and direction of the change. The avalanche of policies – some implemented and others abandoned – left many stakeholders confused and suspicious about the goals of the reform. While the financial aspect of the restructuring emerged from the data as the main reason for the change, stakeholders began to consider whether there were hidden agendas behind this rationale, and whether it was perhaps a pretext for the infiltration of Ultra Orthodox practices into the community schools. Doubts and suspicions were intensified as the restructuring began to affect those areas that were considered to be the “heart and the soul” of the schools, such as their assumed educational achievements, the community services that they provided as well as their “broadly national-traditional” ideological position. It was therefore felt that the restructuring was an attempt to undermine the “imagined” community schools and to reconstruct a new identity for the organisation “behind the backs” of the stakeholders. All these notions created what Hargreaves (2003) has termed “a community of suspicious minds”, and generated negative feelings and emotions towards the restructuring.

Interestingly, the evidence suggests that the ideological rationale of the restructuring was not obvious to many stakeholders, even though public and private declarations of intent to make the schools “more Jewish” were often made. I will show that the restructuring functioned mainly to highlight the ideological shift that

had already taken place in the schools and in the community and thus it had alerted the otherwise indifferent community to the Orthodox hegemony. Nonetheless, the restructuring also established new structures that could eventually accelerate the ideological shift to the “right”. This resulted in support as well as resistance to the change, and in further fragmentation of the community.

The data analysis reveals that the respondents perceived the restructuring as an authoritarian top-down change process, too broad and too quick to substantially affect the system. The seemingly short-term mandate of the CEO, and the fact that his remuneration was directly linked to the financial recovery of the organisation were perceived to have initiated a process of pure “economism” rather than restructuring or reculturing, whereby visibility and rhetoric took precedence over coherency and integrity. I will show that there was very little “buy in” into the process from the stakeholders, and compliance was achieved by resorting to bullying tactics, including the silencing of critics, pressurising resisters to leave, threats and shaming. These bullying strategies elevated the power of the CEO and at the same time discredited and ridiculed those who opposed him. While initially the harshness of the process was justified as being “crisis management” in the face of the huge debt and the perceived inefficiency of the organisation, it soon lost credibility and legitimacy. I will argue that the main achievement of the restructuring was to change those in power and to shift control of the schools to the religious establishment, while marginalising the power of the parents and professionals. The loss of control and disempowerment felt by many stakeholders resulted in people turning against each other. Emotions of blame and guilt were followed with depression and submission. Those feelings were exploited by the management to gather support for the restructuring.

Throughout the chapter, I will point out the apparent synergy that has existed between the managerial and the fundamentalist-type discourses. I will demonstrate that while the official rhetoric of the CEO was primarily managerial, the underlying discourse was mostly of religious extremism.

I will end the chapter with a vignette that follows the route and turbulences of one new policy whereby ideological and economic forces interacted to create a new tradition, and in the process marginalised the social role of the schools in the community.

*'In hindsight it had to happen'*¹

The evidence suggests that in the face of the huge financial crisis, the stakeholders tended to view the restructuring as driven primarily by an economic/financial logic. It was understood that drastic measures and strict financial discipline had to be introduced in order to save the schools from financial collapse. The following teacher's voice represents this view:

I think it was essential in terms of finance. I mean the school was closing, and it's no use saying somebody would have saved us. Nobody was. And in my understanding, which might be correct or incorrect, this was the only way that the donors were interested in giving under certain conditions, and the conditions were that [the CEO] would come in. And I think in terms of the fact that we all still have jobs – that had to be. You know, I think it was a 'have to' situation ... And I think because also, the community in general was very tired of money coming in and disappearing. And of people getting subsidies who maybe didn't deserve subsidies. Nobody was accountable for the amount of money that was coming in to the school, and that Board needed a shake-up – it needed it. Of course it's affected everything beyond the Board, but it needed it.²

There was a sense that the restructuring was long overdue and that it was necessary in order to *'clear out the decay and debris that had been there for so many years'*.³

The system went too long twenty years ago. And it only became obvious – and tragic it was, when the cash began to run out. Now the cure is almost worse than the disease, because to cure something that is so old, you have to cut away good and bad and all sorts of things until you get to a point that you start re-growing again and you bring up fresh roots.⁴

Stakeholders at large maintained that the restructuring had to happen because the schools did not run like a business. In order to survive, schools need to change and adopt business-like practices. However, the data analysis reveals diverse responses to the question: *'What do you mean by "school should run like a business"?'* For one respondent it was all about *'effectiveness and efficiency'*.⁵ A certain lay leader conceded, but was unable to describe, what would be different in the schools once they would be managed *'along business-like lines'*. Eventually, he maintained that

¹ Other stakeholder, 10 January 2001. [Document 7:72 (1485). Codes: Restructuring - was good for the system].

² Teacher, 24 October 2002. [Document 49:4 (198:219). Codes: Understanding - financial].

³ Teacher, 30 July 2002. [Document 48:13 (220:225). Codes: Restructuring - was good for the system].

⁴ Community leader, 18 July 2002. [Document 23:18 (360:367). Codes: CEO - throw away the past; Restructuring - was good for the system].

⁵ Other stakeholder, 15 April 2003. [Document 71:20 (567:578). Codes: School - as business].

*'it's difficult to get into specifics, but it wasn't an efficient system'*⁶ – thereby equating business with efficiency.

The CEO's understanding of the concept included the outsourcing of services, creating small cost centres, introducing a good auditing system that could follow costs and expenses, strict control over expenditure and over the pupil:teacher ratio, better use of human capital, etc. There were also ways in which the Board could market services to the schools:

Learning from business ... I'm giving you an example of not continuing to employ more cleaners, but to either outsource, or to create a new company and to place all of those people within it, and to get into business. So in other words, there are ways of creating independence and being able to measure the cost of items – by outsourcing for expensive schools.⁷

One manager agreed that schools needed to *'run according to proper business controls'* in order to survive. Business people are therefore necessary to see *'to the business side of things'* but they should not involve themselves with the educational side.⁸ Another manager likewise did not reject the idea that schools should be run like a business but maintained that this model was suitable for private for-profit schools and not for community schools that subsidise a significant number of pupils:

You cannot run a place like this strictly on business lines. I just don't see that. You can do that if you run a [private] college, it's designed for that, but when you are talking about a community-type school, you can't do it.⁹

The teacher voice quoted below interprets the notion "school as business" as more control and contractual relationships among stakeholders. In the following quotation she vaguely described the shift from internal accountability to external accountability:

Also he has tried to make it more of a business-like school, you know where you have a contract and the kids, they don't sign it but they get a code of conduct, so it is like they have a business role and you have a business role ... You are more accountable for what you do. Whereas you have always been accountable, but nobody has ever really said anything, now it has been made very obvious, not in writing, but very obvious, that you can be called to a disciplinary hearing if you don't stay within the rules.¹⁰

⁶ Manco member, 5 August 2002. [Document 16:10 (185:193). Codes: Reason - mismanagement; School - as business].

⁷ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:17 (350:364). Codes: CEO - Managerial discourse; School - as business].

⁸ Manager, 26 June 2002. [Document 28:31 (912:927). Codes: School - as business].

⁹ Manager, 11 March 2003. [Document 68:49 (1684:1705). Codes: School - as business].

¹⁰ Teacher, 26 May 2002. [Document 8:9 (218:242). Codes: School - as business].

Another teacher voice suggested that the problem with the schools was *'total mismanagement'* as they did not *'run as a business, it was much more compassionate and much more caring in those days'*.¹¹ She thus equates inefficiency and mismanagement with caring and compassion.

It was acknowledged that some elements within the process were good for the system. While there was a tacit understanding that the ruthless and rather chaotic manner in which changes were implemented could negate the potential good of the restructuring, there was also the nagging feeling that *'if one really wants to bring about harsh change, then maybe the only way to do it ... is to do it harshly and to demonstrate the harshness by just throwing everyone out and destabilising the whole thing'*.¹² One teacher commented likewise:

You needed a ruthless person, to be perfectly frank, to remove certain people. I don't know whether he's removed the right people, I honestly can't say. But he needed to remove certain "dead wood", if you want to say – especially at – I don't know at what sort of level – a teaching level – where there was an over-abundance of teachers in certain departments¹³

In teachers' perceptions the "dead wood" and the redundancy were mostly at "other" schools or in "other" departments, but not their own, even though some teachers did admit that they could have had a *'heavier load'*.¹⁴

It is safe to say that the initial consensus was that the restructuring was a necessary, short-term harsh action that would sort out the organisation and put it on the right track; that is, business-like lines. Subsequently, a number of stakeholders referred to the CEO as a henchman. It was expected that his engagement would be *'a short- to medium-term contract of two to three years to turn around the institution, put it on a sound financial footing, put proper systems in place where they were not in place and then to advertise for a permanent CEO'*.¹⁵ This perception was, however, changed when stakeholders sensed that *'he's stuck, and he's going to stay here for as long as he can and get as much out of the system as he can'*.¹⁶

¹¹ Manager, 25 June 2002. [Document 17:14 (493:496). Codes: School - as business].

¹² Other stakeholder, 7 February 2002. [Document 7:74 (1511:1518). Codes: Restructuring - crisis management].

¹³ Other stakeholder, 4 November 2002. [Document 19:34 (585:595). Codes: Process - the retrenchment process].

¹⁴ Teacher, 14 April 2002. [Document 13:39 (990:1008). Codes: Teachers - not working hard enough].

¹⁵ Lay leader, 16 July 2002. [Document 26:28 (566:579). Codes: Restructuring - expectation].

¹⁶ Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:67 (1154:1163). Codes: CEO – Henchman; CEO - Motivation for taking the job].

The perception that the restructuring was unavoidable, and that this was the only way to save the schools, persisted in spite of a growing realisation that things were not going the way they should:

I'm not convinced we did the right thing. I think we did the only thing we could do when we did it, but I'm not sure it was the right thing.¹⁷

He saved Jewish education and for that you have got to give him [credit]. He saved it because the banks would have closed us down ... That is it. What is he saving it for – what is his ulterior motive for what he is saving it for – if everything in the past was no good?¹⁸

Significantly, only one response to the question '*What is your understanding of the restructuring?*' dealt with the “bigger picture”; that it, viewing the restructuring as a process that had to happen considering the changes in South Africa. The respondent maintained that this process would be remembered as the turning point whereby South African Jews began to adapt to the new social, political and economic order. This voice also expresses the notion of “no choice”. The “bigger picture” – that is, the South African context – is perceived as unfriendly and unsupportive:

The community has so long been accustomed to being treated as a special minority because the South African government before 1994 was a government of the minority. Now it has become a government of the majority. The Jewish schools will have to become accustomed to the fact that the minorities are not going to be treated specially – they are going to have to fend for themselves, and I think they are slowly getting accustomed to that. If I had to look at the overall picture and if I had looked twenty years ahead of me and looked back on this whole [the CEO] saga, its going to be the moment in time when the King David Schools had to accommodate themselves to the reality of the new South Africa – that they were not going to get any help except from themselves. Either they survived on their own or they went down. That is going to be how the history books are going to be written, you see. And I think that to the extent that they are able to get over the financial crisis and concentrate on the provision of better education, the better it will be.¹⁹

The evidence so far demonstrates that the stakeholders generally concurred that the restructuring had to happen because the schools were not managed like a business, even though a number of respondents pointed to the complexity of the term. Nevertheless, the business-like practice of bringing in a “henchman to clean up” the institution was accepted uncritically as the only path to organisational recovery. Once this solution was identified there were no attempts to open other “windows of

¹⁷ Honorary officer, 28 October 2002. [Document 30:22 (758:761). Codes: Restructuring - had to happen].

¹⁸ Manager, 26 May 2002. [Document 11:145 (670:680). Codes: Restructuring - hidden agenda].

¹⁹ Community leader, 18 July 2002. [Document, 23:31 (679:700). Codes: Restructuring - part of a bigger change in SA].

opportunity” and to look for more creative solutions. The expectations were that the solution must work and that stakeholders must “get over it” and adapt. Even those who suspected that the restructuring was not going the way it should have, did not reject the application of business practices to the institution.

The narrative also brings to the fore the overarching feelings of isolation and disempowerment in the community. This is gleaned from phrases such as “nobody was going to save us” and we “have to fend for ourselves”. It was therefore perceived that in this new context that is hostile towards independent schools, it was necessary to take some drastic measures that might not have been contemplated under different circumstances. The schools had to accept the necessity and the inevitability of the proposed market-led change. The market was perceived as the only mechanism to provide the community with the certainty and security it desired. The community schools had to either learn to swim in this harsh business-like context, or else they would sink.

‘This restructuring didn’t happen the way we were promised it was going to happen’²⁰

When taking up his a position as the head of the organisation, the CEO announced his intention to shape ‘*a new VISION for the Board and its structures*’ (emphasis in the original).²¹ The theme of his introductory letter to the staff was that of progress and change in order to compete in the new global economy:

We are all aware that we live in a world that is rapidly changing, and we need to ask ourselves whether we as an organisation have sufficiently responded to that change. We live in an IT revolution, but have we increased our skills sufficiently to honestly claim that we have not only kept up with the times, but that we are leaders in the knowledge revolution?²²

The CEO continued to articulate the need to ‘*make sure that the cost structure of every unit is optimum, both in its use of human capital and its other expenditure*’. In this first communication from the CEO, the tone was clearly managerial. There was no mention of Jewish ethos or community needs, but rather a vision of a ‘*financially viable organisation that will offer the best service and education in the attainment of our goals*’.

²⁰ Manager, 2 July 2002. [Document 6:95 (221:265). Codes: Restructuring - expectation].

²¹ Memo from [the CEO] to all members of staff, 7 May 2001.

²² Ibid.

Based on this managerial discourse, and the announcement that the organisation would become '*lean and mean*',²³ there were expectations that the system would be reorganised and everyone would have a more defined role within it. It was anticipated that there would be more expertise in the schools, with a smaller yet more efficient staff complement. Doubts quickly crept in, however, as expectations did not materialise. One respondent became quite frustrated:

... because we expected all these changes and nothing happened. We had no idea. We thought: here is a guy who is going to tell you what to do – and this was very nice, and we will clear up all the goalposts. But when it came to the crunch, we are basically running as we always have.²⁴

One manager initially welcomed the restructuring, as she was aware that there were unproductive members of staff who had become a burden on the school community. She also became disappointed, as she perceived that the restructuring did not necessarily target those individuals but rather depleted the system of those who were vital for its existence. The promised “retention of skills” did not take place. She perceived the restructuring as an attack on both teachers and professionalism:

At first I understood the restructuring to be something that was going to improve the finances, and for me that was okay because we really were in trouble. Yes, at first I understood the concept of, you know – let's get rid of the dead wood. But the dead wood didn't stop there. You were now getting right down to the roots and the basic shoots, and depleting, and depleting, and depleting the staff of vital people ... I don't know, this restructuring didn't happen the way we were promised it was going to happen. And the unaccountability for respect for the teaching fraternity, is for me the most horrendous thing. There is no respect. We are just common workers.²⁵

One respondent summed it up when he maintained that while '*there was a need for tightening up ... the importance of economics has over-ridden to a large extent the importance of the academics and the ethos of the Jewish day school*'.²⁶

As the restructuring proceeded and the CEO alienated many of the school executives, principals, teachers, parents as well as Board members, the process became less understood and less supported. The school community was divided among stakeholders who supported both the ends and means of the restructuring; stakeholders who were able to separate the two and thus support what was being done

²³ CEO address to the staff of the SABJE, 25 April 2001.

²⁴ Manager, 21 April 2002. [Document 4:100 (912:917). Codes: Restructuring - expectation - but nothing happened].

²⁵ Manager, 2 July 2002. [Document 6:95 (221:265). Codes: Understanding - attack teachers and professionalism].

²⁶ Manager, 26 August 2002. [Document 31:40 (46:73). Codes: Understanding - not clear whether financial or educational].

while condoning the way in which it was done;²⁷ and stakeholders who rejected both ends and means and perceived the restructuring as an attack on the educational achievements and the symbols of the schools. The most common feeling was that of confusion and lack of knowledge or understanding of the restructuring. In the following excerpt, one manager expressed these feelings as she tries to make sense of the trajectory and the meaning of the change:

Nobody really knows and understands what this person is really meaning to do. What is his vision, what he is trying to achieve, what is the aim? In the beginning he was busy with the financial aspect of the school. We understood, they brought in a financial genius who will correct the financial deficit. Suddenly, we don't understand why he enters the educational side, and now he is trying to change the uniform; we don't know what will be the next stage. And I don't understand; we did not have educational problems, we did not have problem with syllabi, so why is he interfering?²⁸

It seemed feasible that the restructuring had lost its legitimacy when stakeholders could no longer follow its logic:

For example – he organised the finances and so on, but why he has to interfere in the way things are running, and he doesn't know whether they are running well or not – he just wants a change. And that's "change for change's sake" ... I said, you do not fix something that is not broken.²⁹

Similar to the respondent quoted below, some stakeholders became suspicious as to whether the financial crisis was real or "manufactured" in order to institute certain changes at the schools:

I don't know, and I think that nobody knows, to what extent the financial situation is bad, if it was really as bad as the teachers were told – because, every week they told us, and put us under pressure and they expected to receive our sympathy so they "fabricated" numbers. One day it was 30 the next 31 and then they even got to R40 million ... and then the [vice chairperson] came – she said that there was a problem but now it is much better and that there are now donors and that they solved the financial problems. It seemed very strange to us that they managed to do it so quickly. Nobody knows, they say that the donors are anonymous. There are many rumours, but it seems that the situation is not so bad, because there are new car parks and shades for the teachers' cars ... they are investing money. But when there is a bad financial position you don't invest money. Rumours are spreading, and then you hear that some of the rumours are true. In most cases they are true but you don't know, you are not told anything and you don't really know what is happening. There is a feeling that there is a hidden agenda.³⁰

²⁷ For example: Manager, 25 June 2002. [Document 17:21 (556:560). Codes: CEO - I like what he is doing, I don't like the way].

²⁸ Manager, 14 May 2002. [Document 3:110 (781:792). Codes: Understanding - not clear whether financial or educational; restructuring – no clear map of change].

²⁹ Other stakeholder, 4 November 2002. [Document 19:12 (329:346). Codes: CEO - should only be involved in finance].

³⁰ Manager, 14 May 2002. [Document 3:213 (44:77). Codes: Financial debt - figures - real or fabrication].

The investment in car parks described in Chapter 2 as the “glossification” of the schools was justified by stakeholders who maintained that it was important to continue with capital expenditure. This spending was, however, objected to by teachers who were *‘left wondering why some teacher was replaced but her year’s salary was spent on carports’*.³¹

Stakeholders became even more uncertain about the financial crisis when a few months into the process there were talks about building a new high school in Sandton and a new middle school at the Linksfield campus:

I’m not sure I understand it. I understood that the restructuring was to worry about the finances. But to create a middle school now ... you have to have another principal. You have to have more staff. You have to have separate facilities, and I’m not sure that it is addressing the finances.³²

Many parents did not take much notice of the restructuring until it affected their children’s teachers or somebody that they knew personally. In June 2001, amid much commotion and resistance from the schools’ staff, the CEO addressed the parents in order to convince them as to the necessity of the harsh measures. His charisma and oratory skills, his command of the managerial discourse and the promises of efficiency, accountability and responsiveness to parents as customers, appealed to the parents who accepted some of the disturbances in the education of their children as temporary and unfortunate. For example, in the following citation the respondent understood the restructuring in terms of the Hebrew teachers not working enough hours and teachers having too many privileges. Once these problems would be settled, the respondent believed that the schools would return to their routine:

I just believed that, yes it would be traumatic for the first six months, because it was a lot of extra work for a Hebrew teacher – but at the end of the day a lot of it was the Hebrew. A lot of the issue was the Hebrew. And also I felt that we ... would get past this period where teachers were taking long leave, but once we had passed it, then we would just carry on as normal.³³

Another parent disagreed. In her response she did not trust a restructuring that would profit the CEO, thereby encouraging him to make some changes that were possibly not educationally sound:

³¹ Teacher, 27 May 2002. [Document 14:39 (735:749). Codes: Costs - new - carports and parking].

³² Teacher, 30 July 2002. [Document 48:18 (319:332). Codes: Understanding - not clear whether financial or educational].

³³ Parent, 15 October 2002. [Document 44:18 (694:709). Codes: Understanding - Hebrew has been restructured].

I have a problem with the Board's changing attitude. [The CEO] believes [that] the school should be a profit-making organisation. I think it's good to make a profit that you then plough back into the school, but I don't believe the profit must be used then to pay a specific individual, whoever he may be. I don't think that what [the CEO] did, someone else may have done differently if they would have been brought in. I think that he – what really affected us as parents – is that when he started this “taking your long leave” story – that classrooms were disrupted and our children were unhappy. When he started meddling with those issues instead of saying: ‘Let me look where I can fix up – where I can save money, without disrupting education ...’.³⁴

Based on the managerial discourse of decentralisation and responsiveness to parents' needs there were also expectations among parents of substantive change in the schools. One parent hoped that with the restructuring the Board would be decentralised and the schools as well as the parents would be empowered. However, this did not happen. In the following extract the parent voice distinguished between cost cutting and restructuring. While the former took place quite callously, the latter did not happen:

I think what happened was – there was major financial mismanagement. There are significant allegations going around about negligence through to corruption kind of things. But I think all that vested itself ultimately in a financial crisis. So two or three members of the Board sat up and said: ‘Crisis! We've got to do something’. They appointed a new CEO whose first task was to save the system financially. And I think that has probably been relatively successful. ... We are in a much more optimistic state now than we were eighteen months ago, two years ago. And that's really the only restructuring that's taken place. I don't mean “only” dismissively. There has not yet been any restructuring in terms of – What is the role of the Board? How do you decentralise management? What should be decentralised? What should be brought to the centre? Now that maybe hopefully is just a process, because if you are in a crisis, you pull in everything to the centre – sort out what you can, and then start looking at other things.³⁵

Another parent likewise maintained that there was no substantive change in the educational aspects of the schools, and that the restructuring might have changed those in control but had not permeated the schools. According to him the schools were continuing as usual but with fewer teachers:

What restructuring? ... To my mind, you've got a new CEO, okay. But basically, that's not restructuring ... It's the same teacher body that continues. The fact that we had too many teachers ... was bad financial governance. And so that's a rationalisation of costs. It's nothing to do with the education. It's not as though the kids are getting taught less. It's just that there were too many teachers and they had too many free periods. That's nothing to do with the teaching ... I do not perceive that there's been anything radical. We had a bad period when the teachers were

³⁴ Parent, 14 August 2002. [Document 40:62 (1181:1196). Codes: Understanding - not clear whether financial or educational].

³⁵ Parent, 21 October 2002. [Document 43:28 (725:738). Codes: Understanding - financial].

demoralised because of [the CEO] business, and it wasn't good for the school. I think they've recovered and so I don't see anything ...³⁶

In summary, while there was general consensus that the restructuring was necessary, the process did not happen the way stakeholders thought it would. The discourse of business was generally accepted, but it was expected that changes along these lines could be implemented without disturbing the educational services of the schools. The narrative begins to point towards a definite gap between intention and implementation, rhetoric and practice. In spite of the managerial discourse and its promise of order and certainty, the stakeholders experienced the process as a pure cost-cutting exercise, with very little impact on either the structures or the culture of the schools. Subsequently, there was no confidence as to whether the restructuring was addressing the financial crisis and the perceived causes of it, such as the structure of the Board. The responses reveal a strong sense of “being in the dark” – not knowing what it was all about – which eventually led to a lack of trust and a lack of cooperation with the process. One can also begin to detect a division whereby the school community is referred to as “we”, and the CEO is referred to as “he”. The lay leaders who brought the CEO in were referred to as “they”. This resulted in the polarisation of the school community; a repeated theme that emerges from the data.

The research suggests that there must be a consensus among key stakeholders on the needs for and the goals of change (Reimer & McGinn, 1997). It is clear that if stakeholders do not understand why change is necessary, implementation could be problematic. In the restructuring of the Jewish community schools there was some consensus about the financial crisis, and people were ready to accept the changes. Yet, there was no consensus about failure in other aspects of the schools, such as their educational achievements or their ethos. The excellent matriculation exam results were often brought up as an example of the high quality of education. Even though teachers were aware that there were many educational aspects that needed to be improved regarding the culture of learning and teaching, the prevalent perception was that the restructuring did not affect those areas and that the CEO was actually fixing what did not need to be fixed. When the CEO began to interfere with the educational

³⁶ Parent, 31 January 2003. [Document 63:46 (1123:1147). Codes: Understanding - nothing has changed].

services and with the ethos of the schools he therefore lost the support of the teachers. They began to view the restructuring as a “change for change’s sake”.

‘He is like a bull in a China shop’³⁷

The only word that can describe the atmosphere in the schools at the beginning of the restructuring process was *chaos*:

... there was like – it’s very, very difficult to describe to you what happened then. There was almost like an explosion – an atomic bomb. And almost with indecent haste [the CEO] was foisted on us.³⁸

This chaos was aggravated by the fact that most of the restructuring plans were revealed to stakeholders via messengers or rumours, which created uncertainty and suspicion. There was a sense that the CEO did not understand the system, did not understand what Jewish education was all about, did not know what was happening at the schools and did not understand the process of educational change. This resulted in conflicting messages, in impulsive decisions being made and reversed, and in policies being changed, terminated or arbitrarily applied. The following examples will demonstrate some of the disorder that was created by the various attempts to put new structures in the schools and the ad-hoc manner in which this was done. The variety of the responses is indicative of the spectrum of the intended changes:

We got all these mixed versions of what we were allowed and what we weren’t allowed ... so I think the messages we were getting were not accurate.³⁹

A million changes at the same time, no logic, even though some of the decisions are very good, even brilliant.⁴⁰

He promised me last year that he’s going to bring modern computers and more modern programmes, more IT, and all these kinds of things. He hasn’t delivered on any of those areas. We are still waiting for the comprehension programme.⁴¹

You know, everyone thinks – what is he going to do next? You know, what’s next? But at the same time people always laugh. You know he does things impulsively. He put up that wall ... the wall was put up and nothing else. He seems to be the kind of person who acts impulsively and never sees it through.⁴²

³⁷ Lay leader, 29 July 2002. [Document 47:3 (230). Codes: CEO - does not understand the system].

³⁸ Honorary officer, 15 August 2002. [Document 33:9 (325:348). Codes: Process - employing CEO].

³⁹ Teacher, 21 February 2002. [Document 1:96 (422:426). Codes: Restructuring - no clear map of change].

⁴⁰ Manager, 5 August 2002. [Document 9:17 (234:235). Codes: Restructuring - no clear map of change].

⁴¹ Parent, 14 August 2002. [Document 40:45 (854:859). Codes: CEO - does not keep promises].

⁴² Other stakeholder, 12 July 2002. [Document 24:78 (453:462). Codes: CEO - impulsivity].

[The vice-chairperson] stood up at the [PTA] meeting and she said: ‘You guys don’t understand [the CEO]. I understand him because I am like him. He goes to bed at night. He has an idea in the middle of the night. He jumps out of bed in the morning. He says – I’m going to implement my idea ...’. You know, I don’t think she realised what she said. So that’s the way he behaves.⁴³

He makes up his mind and then people fight him on it and then he changes ... like the remedial. The kids have got to be withdrawn, and then included. Then they are withdrawn but parents pay for it. You know, all this nonsense.⁴⁴

Everybody was going to have to go through an interview to assess what they had to offer to the school ... it was like a job interview ... it was degrading and it was really terrible. At one point it felt like we were all vying with each other to hang on to the positions. ... Then it was only going to be for the Hebrew staff and then the whole staff, it caused so much fuss and so much confusion and it just never happened.⁴⁵

And then he got involved in the primary schools. No – then he came to talk to us [high school] about the leave and doing away with leave and that. And then he got involved with the primary school ... And then the high school was left alone, and then all of a sudden – boom – like five teachers get letters that they’ve got to go. They are 60 and they have got to leave. And yet other 60-year-olds are there. You know, it’s very strange.⁴⁶

He often has to retract because he does things and then they are not finding favour, and there’s a lot of criticism coming from all quarters. ... He doesn’t seem to think that he’s lost face. ... I mean he goes as far as sending out circulars when these things are in black and white, and then two weeks later because there’s a huge uproar about some of these things, it suddenly sort of dies a natural death – he kind of retracts and postpones, or he says – well, right, we’ll leave things as they are at the moment.⁴⁷

In his eagerness to change every aspect of the organisation all at once the CEO was jumping from one issue to another, from one school to another and from one decision to another without following anything through. The teachers were trying to keep some sanity in this chaos by finding meaning for being there and persevering with their job expectations:

We don’t know what is going on, we don’t know what the next day will bring. No, all there is, is confusion, badly delivered new edicts, which are then cancelled or changed or just get lost somewhere along the line. Much of it has been total chaos and what we have had to do as members of staff is just remember that our first loyalty is to the kids, and to just try and get on with our roles as teachers.⁴⁸

⁴³ Parent, 14 August 2002. [Document 40:40 (796:808). Codes: CEO - impulsivity].

⁴⁴ Other stakeholder, 23 May 2002. [Document 12:149 (1720:1726). Codes: CEO - reversing decisions].

⁴⁵ Teacher, 27 May 2002. [Document 14:58 (392:412). Codes: CEO - reversing decisions].

⁴⁶ Other stakeholder, 23 May 2002. [Document 12:96 (1091:1105). Codes: Restructuring - no clear map of change; Teachers - learning about changes].

⁴⁷ Manager, 8 October 2002. [Document 34:6 (168:182). Codes: CEO - reversing decisions].

⁴⁸ Teacher, 27 May 2002. [Document 14:36 (644:671). Codes: Restructuring - no clear map of change].

It will be wrong to assume that everyone resisted a broad and all-embracing change process. There were those who clearly agreed that the system was no good and needed to be rebuilt from scratch. The stakeholders' "illogical" resistance to such thinking was explained again by people's resistance to change and by the psyche of the Jewish community. Yet even this next respondent seemed to understand that the change was too broad, too quick and not always implemented in the right way.

I understand him, because he's a man of change. I'm not saying always a diplomatic change – but he's a man of change. And he would like to come in and open up every little corner and change it. But they don't want it! So be it. In a sentence – I think it's very sad. I think it's very, very sad that our people won't accept change ... There clearly has to be a 'slowdown' of change. The time clock has to be different now, because Jews don't like change. And parents don't like change. And parents are saying: 'King David's fine. We have good results. Stop analysing each and every aspect of the system'. And that is now what we have told [the CEO]. We've said to him: 'Stop – woow. Nothing. Do nothing. Forget about a middle school'.⁴⁹

The eagerness to change all at once was explained by the short-term character of the CEO's engagement, which made him go for quick fixes that would target visible exterior elements within the system without a parallel deep cultural change:

[I thought] that initially he would – before he makes any major changes – he would talk to a lot of people – get some feedback – find out how things operated before, and where they went wrong – because it wasn't always good – it was bad times. We did lots of bad things, I am sure at all stages – to get a feel of it and then begin to – but I think the mandate given was 'get it right within a year'. In other words, see to it – let me put it this way – I think the mandate was 'see to it that things happen quickly so then we can say to the banks – we are on track, or this is our projected plan. We will save so much this year'. I think that was the mandate, and maybe that's why he took such drastic steps and he targeted areas which were easy areas to target.⁵⁰

Once stakeholders got used to the mixed messages, they somehow learned to ignore them. It was therefore perceived that in spite of all the emotions, rumours, declarations of intent and articulations of plans, very little change was experienced at the school level. The prevalent perception was that '*despite all talk, very little has changed*'.⁵¹ Some teachers adapted to their increased workloads, while other teachers' loads were not changed much. Managers maintained that they were investing their time in '*damage control*'.⁵² The following teacher voice indicates that the teacher was

⁴⁹ Honorary officer, 20 August 2002. [Document 41:36 (902:915). Codes: CEO - approach to change; 41:9 (249:258); 41:48 (691:704) Codes: Restructuring went bad - who is to blame].

⁵⁰ Other stakeholder, 15 July 2002. [Document 25:35 (839:857). Codes: Restructuring - quick fix].

⁵¹ Manager, 17 March 2003. [Document 69:16 (480:482). Codes: Restructuring - no change at school level].

⁵² Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:9 (171:190). Codes: Restructuring - no clear map of change].

quite aware of intended changes, but that they had no meaning for her as long as they did not disturb her or her own children's routine. She seemed to separate rumours and intentions from actual changes and learned to react to only those changes that actually took place:

Quite honestly ... I don't see anything that's changed. I know that there are plans to restructure the whole education system, but to be quite honest with you, I see nothing. For me, it's exactly the same ... like the middle schools, you see my children are not really involved ... With regard to any other restructuring – for me, nothing has changed. Definitely nothing. It's exactly the same ... I have heard that the Board has been restructured. I mean, people have been retrenched and that they are basically working on a skeleton staff. But more than that, I have no information whatsoever. None at all ... I've heard that the [teaching of] Hebrew is going to be changed; *Chumash* (Bible) is going to be taught differently to a language – they are going to have other teachers teaching those subjects. It's basically what you hear. But I haven't seen anything concrete at the moment ... There are a lot of rumours.⁵³

The narrative has so far described a clearly unsuccessful change process wherein one person was trying to take on, by himself, a comprehensive restructuring with no buy-in from the system. It was experienced as a restructuring without direction. Subsequently, the school staff denied that any change had happened at all. It was perceived as “a storm in a tea cup”.

Research maintains that new leaders sometimes wilfully create chaos – some kind of *manufactured uncertainty* – in order to arouse panic, to set pretexts for their policy interventions and to keep educators and everyone else off balance (Hargreaves et al, 1998:5). And indeed there was a perception that the chaos was created by design in order to ‘*destabilise everybody, so that he could do what he wants to do and take control ...*’.⁵⁴ It was envisaged that once control was achieved the turmoil would settle down. To a certain extent this was achieved. In spite of all the disorder there was the perception that the CEO was in control and that the system would collapse completely if he was to leave. One manager elaborated:

Because I know this last time – I don't know if you know about it in the high school PTA ... and people were saying he's really in trouble now, and he's going to have to leave. And my panic was that he would actually get angry and fed up and say – look, I've tried my best, and just go. And I think then it would be a disaster, because he is holding the place together as much as people think that everything's falling apart. He is holding the place together. And he's got a very tight control. ... I really do ... and I even spoke to one of the teachers. She thought he must go, and it's ridiculous – and I said, ‘Who will take his place?’ I actually said that. And she said, ‘Oh, there are

⁵³ Teacher, 3 July 2002. [Document 18:7 (215:235). Codes: Understanding - nothing has changed; (243:247) Codes: Understanding - Hebrew has been restructured].

⁵⁴ Manager, 15 October 2002. [Document 39:26 (931:947). Codes: Process - destabilising the system].

people like – there's one father who is an attorney but he's a big businessman'. And I said, 'Ah, he wouldn't be interested ... the fact that he stood up at the PTA and complained, doesn't mean to say he is going to be able to run the organisation. And he won't give up his business to come and run the organisation'. And then she said, 'Oh [this principal], or [that principal]'. I mean they were throwing out names that were ridiculous.⁵⁵

In the above quotation the respondent articulated what Fullan terms “frustrated or despondent dependency” (2001:1), which usually comes after an episodic improvement by a charismatic and coercive leader. The following respondent likewise expressed this feeling of disempowerment and isolation. She also described the breakdown of trust among school staff – one of the adverse consequences of the restructuring:

I'm fighting a losing battle. Who do you go and talk to. I don't talk to my boss. She's scared for her own life. You don't know how things are twisted around. You don't know even who to talk to in the staff room. Everybody's clever. They are all looking after themselves.⁵⁶

Another respondent who was in academic and managerial positions for many years and who was hurt to see his life's work being destroyed, expressed a similar sense of resignation:

What can I do? “Cometh the hour, cometh the man”. You go through stages in an institution, and from a personal level you worked at something – you've contributed as best you can to it. You think you've done a reasonable job. There's a new era. There are changes. You can't castigate yourself for what's happening. You are forgotten. You're history. And that's natural – that's the way it should be ... Maybe that's a natural event and times have changed – different people are running the Board. Different thinking.⁵⁷

To summarise, the narrative reveals that the restructuring was perceived as a quick fix owing to the CEO's mandate and his intention to demonstrate visible changes in a short space of time. This resulted in ad-hoc, impulsive changes before any attempt was made to understand the culture of the organisation and the context of change. In the chaos that was created stakeholders exhibited various emotions, such as denial (nothing really changed), fear of the future (it could be worse if the CEO left), defeat and disempowerment (what can I do?), isolation and withdrawal (who can you talk to?) polarisation and suspicion (they are all looking after themselves). All these were negative emotions that made change a threatening and unpleasant experience. The

⁵⁵ Manager, 11 July 2002. [Document 29:17 (682:738). Codes: CEO - holding the system together].

⁵⁶ Teacher, 9 January 2003. [Document 53:52 (926:950). Codes: Teachers - compliance].

⁵⁷ Other stakeholder, 15 July 2002. [Document, 25:73 (1250:1270). Codes: History - institution memory].

parent voice below connected these negative feelings to the insecurities already felt by the school community:

It was a wonderful school and there wasn't ever a threat of it closing. There wasn't ever a threat that your grandchildren weren't going to go to the school. And now there's – I don't like living ... we live in insecure, uncertain times anyway, with all this violence, and I feel particularly vulnerable having been through a terrible incident [hijacking] myself now – that now that my daughter's schooling career and future is at stake – so yes, I do feel very, very insecure and I think it's given everybody the jitters.⁵⁸

'We will become more Jewish, if you know what I mean by more Jewish'⁵⁹

The CEO declared his intention to make the schools more Jewish, both publicly and privately. For him the financial crisis was an opportunity to change the ethos of the schools:

I think even a secular English-speaking headmaster is a problem in terms of the ethos ... I am saying in terms of the restructuring, the restructuring will not be haphazard on the basis of just saving money. I think together with the saving of money, which is necessary, we have to move closer towards the ethos of the schools in terms of senior positions. So you take advantage of the restructuring for money, to bring about what we are really trying to achieve.⁶⁰

Though the CEO agreed to ensure the '*perpetuation of the ethos*'⁶¹ of the schools he adopted the rhetoric that he was not going to change the ethos but only to "intensify" it. He believed that there was a need to reinforce Jewish values since '*we became slack in their observance*'.⁶² He argued that major events such as September 11 and the Durban anti-racism conference were there to remind the community of the importance of Jewish education:

The evil perpetrators have not wasted time to link the blame [of September 11] on the State of Israel and the Jewish people. The Durban anti-racism conference saw some of the most blatant anti-Semitic and racist activity that we have ever experienced, and on our doorstep. If we learn from history, denial and withdrawal are poor antidotes. Ignorance is no answer to the well-orchestrated and financed onslaught against us. More than ever we have an obligation to educate ourselves and our children with regard to Jewish values. If ever there was a time that the KD Schools needed to exist and inculcate these values, it is NOW. ... *We need to stand proud of these values.* While others have adopted some of those values, many have corrupted them in trying to achieve their evil goals. (Emphasis in the original.)⁶³

⁵⁸ Teacher, 30 July 2002. [Document 48:29 (603:622). Codes: Insecurity].

⁵⁹ Manco member, 20 August 2002. [Document 41:37 (915). Codes: Impact - religious base - more impetus].

⁶⁰ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2002. [Document 20:150 (3021:3035). Codes: Restructuring - financial or ideological].

⁶¹ Memorandum from the chairperson to all members of staff, 3 May 2001.

⁶² New CEO for SABJE. *Davidian Star*, July 2001.

⁶³ From the desk of Allan Zulberg 22 October 2001.

To the sensitive ear, it was easy to detect an extremist undertone, whereby the “others” are “evil people” who had forsaken Jewish values. The spreading of fear and the feeling that “all are against us” had been used to gather support for the restructuring. In the sentences that followed the above quotation, the ‘*evil goals*’ were identified as the goals of those stakeholders who circulated damaging ‘*false rumours*’ blaming the CEO for not communicating with them.

Stakeholders’ perceptions of the ideological restructuring were diverse. While one interviewee observed no change and that ‘*the school is probably as irreligious as it always was*’,⁶⁴ another respondent was ‘*disturbed*’ to observe a ‘*religious influence in the charedi side of things...*’.⁶⁵

It is feasible that the Hebrew teachers felt the ideological restructuring in a more acute way at the beginning, as the subject was perceived to have lost its privileged status at the schools. As alluded to in Chapter 3, based on the *charedi* approach to the language, Hebrew was considered as a secular language in the same category as English or Afrikaans. The teaching hours had been cut, teachers were retrenched and some had resigned sensing their changed status and increased workloads. Moreover, central coordination was devolved to the schools, and the heads of the Hebrew departments at the various primary schools were often referred to as the heads of Jewish Studies. In addition, the CEO objected to some of the Hebrew textbooks that had previously been used in the system, describing them as a “desecration of God” and was trying to introduce more religiously orientated readers. The *Ulpán* programme to Israel was terminated as soon as the CEO took office, and the high school pupils were given the choice to decide whether they would take Hebrew or Jewish Studies for matric. There was also an attack on the teachers’ level of observance. It was intimated that only observant teachers should lead the prayer sessions and teach the Bible. This, however, did not materialise for lack of suitable staff proficient enough in the Hebrew language. The new principal of Linksfield High School,⁶⁶ speaking about the challenges facing Hebrew Studies expressed a similar attitude towards the Hebrew teachers when he remarked:

⁶⁴ Manco member, 5 August 2002. [Document 16:35 (568:576). Codes: Impact - religious base - no change].

⁶⁵ Community leader, 8 May 2002. [Document 10:77 (464:470). Codes: Impact - religious base - more impetus].

⁶⁶ At the end of 2000, the principal of KDLH retired. His deputy took over the position at the insistence of the executive staff at the school.

We have few observant teachers and with the way things are going we cannot be choosers. I do not see how we can permit non-observant Hebrew teaches to comment on Judaism and Jewish way of life.⁶⁷

As already mentioned in the Chapter 3, this was not a new way of thinking, but with the restructuring it came into the open and into the consciousness of more stakeholders. It is also feasible that under this new regime the more religious stakeholders – such as the new principal of the high school – felt more comfortable expressing their own views, which they would have been reluctant to do in a less supportive context.

While cost cutting occurred in the Hebrew departments, the Jewish Studies departments experienced an injection of money.

I feel that there is much change towards the religious side of the school, there is much emphasis on increasing the religious base. In one school he added young people to help with this, I don't know how efficient they are. In the high school he added three rabbis. I know that they are supposed to help ... they are getting salaries, but we don't know where the money is coming from for it. That is why we don't know how bad the situation was when they were playing on our sympathy, and that is why I don't understand why they took out the people that they took out, and why they did not keep them here, but if there was a financial problem they could do a financial change ...⁶⁸

It is for this reason that the next respondent viewed that change as dishonest and underhanded. She perceived the restructuring as the intention to change the ethos of the schools – namely, its broadly national-traditional stance – without making these intentions known. She was afraid that this change would alienate more parents who already thought that the schools had become too religious. She felt that her integrity had been compromised:

I think he is hoodwinking the parents into believing that because of financial restraints he has had to cut the Hebrew [lessons and teachers]. But if he had to cut the Hebrew because of finances ... then why is he intensifying *Limudei Kodesh* (sacred studies) So I think that he is doing a disservice to the public and that is what is worrying me because those people who wanted their children to have a religious education haven't got their children at King David. So if the restructuring is to make the school more religious then it is not fair, let's say, to the secular and to the ordinary South Africans who have no affiliation to religion and who are there for their children to get what they can't give them at home, but not to the extent that it becomes so rightwing that they are going to be uncomfortable with what their children are learning. As it is they were uncomfortable with Jewish Studies where we taught them about *Shabbat* and there was conflict, we brought conflict into the home, but now even more, and I am worried about that. I am happy on the one side that yes it is

⁶⁷ Challenges facing Hebrew studies – Altshuler. *SA Jewish Report*, 11–18 April 2003.

⁶⁸ Manager, 14 May 2002. [Document 3:242 (825:840). Codes: New costs - campus rabbis; Restructuring - financial or ideological].

going to be *frumer* (more religious), but if I look at the people who are buying into the system, I don't think he is being honest. ... I feel uncomfortable; I feel it is not honest. I feel it is a dishonest restructuring; it is being blanketed as due to financial corruption, whatever you want to call it, he has had to do this.⁶⁹

A secular teacher who observed the increase in the number of Jewish Studies lessons did not see it as an ideological change as it meant very little to her:

But I don't think it's ever been a religious school. And I don't think anything has changed ... so they will have an extra Jewish Studies lesson. But I don't know the purpose of it. It's never been discussed or told to us, or ... We've just been told next years there's going to be ... I think they have three Jewish Studies lessons this year – two this year and three next year, or three this year and four next year ...⁷⁰

Another teacher observed a change in the prayer sessions, but this also did not signify any ideological change for her. The lack of religious meaning that these voices reveal could also be an indication of the continued division between the secular teachers and those in charge of the Jewish curriculum at the schools, and the absence of a common goal:

I haven't seen anything yet. I know that for instance during prayers, whereas before you could perhaps do Hebrew lessons during prayers or if you were preparing for an inter-house day ... but now you can't. Prayers are prayers are prayers. But otherwise [I] haven't seen anything else ... Not really, not yet. But I am a secular teacher so I don't really know.⁷¹

In the different synagogues, rabbis who traditionally objected to the KD schools were rumoured to endorse the changes and to encourage their communities to support the schools. One *Ohr Sameach* rabbi suggested that it was an opportune time to change the religious base of the schools as the Johannesburg community had become more receptive to religiosity since everyone '*had a cousin or brother who has become dati (religious). It's become more a part of their life so they have become less adverse to it*'.⁷² An Ultra Orthodox member of the *Yeshiva Maharsha* community expressed a more extreme view. For him, the restructuring of the schools meant their complete destruction, and for good reason:

KD was like a rotten and bent tree that has to be uprooted completely. A new tree must be planted.⁷³

⁶⁹ Manager, 26 May 2002. [Document 11:48 (440:456). Codes: Impact - religious base; Restructuring - dishonest].

⁷⁰ Teacher, 24 October 2002. [Document 49:34 (1241:1261). Codes: Impact - religious base].

⁷¹ Teacher, 27 May 2002. [Document 14:35 (646:656). Codes: Impact - religious base].

⁷² Other stakeholder, 11 March 2003. [Document 66:22 (60:64). Codes: Jewish community - receptive to religiosity].

⁷³ Journal entry, 3 July 2002. [Document 55:496 (5965:5987). Codes: Understanding - ideological].

Making the schools more religious in a community that is gradually turning to the “right” made some economic sense. This view is expressed in the next quotation whereby the respondent maintained that the competition with other Jewish day schools made this type of change necessary:

I think what has happened in my view, is that the most noticeable change is the growth and the development of the schools on the right of the spectrum. But nevertheless they still represent a relatively small number. But their impact has been quite significant because in a sense they have moved everyone slightly more to the right, because that’s the nature of competition.⁷⁴

These voices clearly show that the restructuring of the Jewish day schools was closely monitored by the broader community, with either approval or dismay. As was mentioned in Chapter 3, the struggle over the ideology of the schools essentially represented the struggle over the future of the community. It seems, however, that the terrain of the conflict had shifted. It was no longer the old struggle between the national/Zionist/secular and the orthodox/traditional. There was no secular/Zionist/national voice protest. The struggle was taking place along the traditional/orthodox-*charedi* continuum. The question was: How far could the community schools be pulled to the “right” without the parents resisting this change? Was the community ready to identify itself purely in terms of religion and lose its “imagined” identity as “broadly national-traditional”?

The proposed changes in the symbols and traditions of the schools, such as the uniform and the *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremony (to be discussed later), alerted the community to the ideological facet of the restructuring. Some viewed it negatively, some positively, and some with indifference. While it was generally accepted that the schools were becoming more religious following the transformation of the community, there was concern that fundamentalist elements would be reinforced through the use of deceitful means. There was a perception that *Ohr Sameach* had taken over the schools. One community leader who was not happy with the fact that the schools were becoming more religious, was comforted by the fact that *Ohr Sameach* is connected to the traditional Lithuanian *Mitnagdim* tradition. This meant that the schools would not become *chassidic*. This is indicative of his hope to maintain part of the narrative of the “imagined” Jewish community in South Africa, as described in Chapter 3, even if that had lost its original meaning:

⁷⁴ Manager, 11 March 2003. [Document 68:1 (270:290). Codes: Understanding - ideological].

[The CEO] would like to see [the schools] much more clearly defined as a *frum* (religious) school ... I wouldn't approve but if he has to convert it into a *frum* school, I would much rather it was *Ohr Sameach* than *Lubavitch*, right. [But] the reality is that the constituency of the schools isn't *Ohr Sameach*. Maybe 10% or 15% of them are, but certainly not 100%. And 10% of them are straight Reform.⁷⁵

One stakeholder sensed that the reason for the trajectory of the perceived changes at KD was the CEO's concern of being criticised by the religious *charedi* community. The CEO's attachment to the *charedi* community disturbed those members who believed that religious education should not be based on coercion or indoctrination. These members questioned whether educational practices that are legitimate in an outreach organisation, wherein people are voluntary affiliates, are considered educationally ethical in a school where the pupils are a captive audience:

[The CEO] is a religious man and he's therefore going to think that he knows everything what Jewish education is about, and I was worried about what his opinion would be. I know the first meeting I sat with him, he said to me: 'I don't have a problem with indoctrination'. You know, and things like that worried me.⁷⁶

The evidence shows that the CEO viewed the Jewish Studies teachers as allies in achieving the ideological goals, and thus deepened the gap between the Jewish Studies teachers and the rest of the staff who became the "others":

I think that was a concern that everybody had, that he was going to make it more *charedi*. In the beginning especially... he's talking a little bit less like that, but in the beginning especially, he would do that. He would sit down with all the Jewish Studies teachers and he would say 'what happens in these meetings, needs to remain confidential, because *there are others out there* who don't understand the x, y or z'. Now that thinking made me feel like a form of fifth column of religious reactionary trying to make the school into what he wants it to be.⁷⁷ (My emphasis.)

Meetings with the Jewish Studies teachers were a safe place where the CEO could openly express his fundamentalist views. While some supported him wholeheartedly, others did not:

For example – his idea that he made absolutely clear to us – he called a meeting of all the Jewish Studies teachers and personnel, and he said that he sees the time when there won't be a Purim play.⁷⁸ Where young girls – where *Tzniut* (modesty) will reign in the schools. Where boys and girls will be separated. Where girls won't be singing to male audiences. Oh yes, he's told us.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Community leader, 28 October 2002. [Document 30:10 (515:529). Codes: CEO - making the schools more religious].

⁷⁶ Manager, 15 October 2002. [Document 39:24 (660:669). Codes: Restructuring - concerns].

⁷⁷ Manager, 15 October 2002. [Document 39:28 (707:725). Codes: CEO - making the schools more religious; Process – divide and rule].

⁷⁸ A tradition at the high schools whereby the pupils stage a play adapting the biblical Purim story to current affairs.

⁷⁹ Teacher, 12 July 2002. [Document 24:51 (940:948). Codes: CEO - making the schools more religious].

The next quotation is quite telling whereby the teacher argued that the CEO was only making teachers more aware of the Jewish side of the schools without making it more religious. Yet the example that she provided about girls not singing in front of a male audience is essentially a *charedi* practice. This is indicative of how the *charedi* worldview became the “common sense” to some stakeholders:

So he has tried to make it more into a Jewish Day School, though he is not making it a religious school. But he is making it more aware of its Jewish side ... But he is making the teachers at least to know that it is a Jewish day school and to be aware of that. For example, he is not too keen on having girls stand up on stage and sing on their own ... because of “Voice of a woman” problems or ... he was very rigid about not having extra-murals on Fridays because of *Shabbat* ...⁸⁰

Interestingly, the second example that the teacher highlighted – stopping extra-mural activities on Fridays – was always a tradition at the schools, yet she attributed it to the new reform. This could be explained as the greater visibility that was given to Jewish traditions at the school, or to the fact that the CEO was “re-inventing” and claiming some of the old traditions.

In spite of the above perceptions, and in spite of the repeated affirmations that the schools were becoming more Jewish, there were at least an equal number of stakeholders who did not perceive any radical change in the religious ethos of the schools, but rather a continuation of a process that had started long before the appointment of the CEO.⁸¹ One manager maintained that it was the former director and the Department of Informal Education that had slowly effected these changes:

And you know, the strengthening of Jewish values and the greater influence that religiosity has in the school, that’s one thing I will say in defence of [the director] – it came very slowly – almost imperceptibly, but it was there. And before we knew it, it was playing a much bigger role and it didn’t affect anybody. From that point of view it was very good. And the situation remains as it is. The Informal Department had a big role to play ... But that hasn’t changed with [the CEO] there.⁸²

This perception was supported by a community leader who maintained that it was the presence of other religious schools in Johannesburg that shaped the character of the KD schools:

But it is a fact that the King David’s, for example, because there is a Yeshiva College and a Torah Academy, they tend to look “right”, ... So I get the impression that the

⁸⁰ Teacher, 26 May 2002. [Document 8:14 (277:314). Codes: Impact - religious base - more impetus].

⁸¹ Twelve respondents (five were teachers) maintained that there was more religiosity at the schools while 11 respondents (eight were teachers) perceived that there was no change. An additional nine respondents (four were teachers) argued that the change was already there.

⁸² Teacher, 12 July 2002. [Document 24:38 (784:797). Codes: Impact - religious base].

King David's, whether they like it or not, have become each year – they edge a little bit towards a higher standard of Orthodoxy ... Many of the teachers don't even realise it, but it's there, maybe even subliminal.⁸³

One parent likewise perceived the ideological change as a slow process that had begun long ago and echoed the transformation of the community. It is instructive how “naturally” the turn to the “right” in the community had been accepted by her in spite of the rather Zionist/secular ethos that she herself had been exposed to at KD. This is indicative of the hegemony of the Orthodox discourse and its position as the “common sense”:

But it's not something that's just happened since [the CEO] has been there, because I think it's come about slowly ... it was happening before he came. So it's not something that he's introduced ... it's different to when I was at King David ... we didn't have a subject like Jewish Studies. It was incorporated in your Hebrew Then one must also consider that the entire Jewish community in South Africa is becoming more religious, just naturally⁸⁴

It was, interestingly, a gentile teacher who pointed out the dichotomy that the Orthodox hegemonic had created at the schools and the resulting crisis of identity for the organisation:

I think there's a dichotomy. There seems to be a swing from many of them to become more religious today. And you've got the swing the opposite side with others that are more towards the Reform. ... But I've noticed it getting – not necessarily the whole system becoming more religious, but I think again – I must be more careful ... I think if you've got certain rabbis who want certain things and they make more pressures, or you've got certain people on the staff who want certain things, then sometimes I think very illogical changes are made.⁸⁵

The perceived lack of a “real” change in the religious base of the schools was explained by the fact that the parents had not been *'educated yet'*. At AGM and PTA meetings, the new principal of KDLJ challenged the parents' morals. An Ultra Orthodox teacher voice did not experience any difficulties in shifting children's level of belief but maintained that success could only be achieved if the parents would follow suit. In this quotation she described the tactics used by outreach fundamentalist organisations to bring people in, and recommended it for the reinvention of the whole school community:

You know children ... learn very quickly. But I actually said to [the CEO] ... and he agreed, I said, I think you have to get the parents on board. If you want to make real changes. And there are many parents who really do, who would be very interested in

⁸³ Community leader, 28 January 2003. [Document 60:21 (718:746). Codes: Impact - religious base - has already been changed].

⁸⁴ Parent, 15 November 2002. [Document 44:25 (848:856). Codes: Impact - religious base].

⁸⁵ Teacher, 16 July 2002. [Document 38:31 (887:942). Codes: Impact - religious base - dichotomy].

making real changes. But they need to be educated, you know. And you can run courses on philosophy and you can run all sorts of different – just to get people thinking. ... It depends on how you pitch it. I mean I just think like [Ultra Orthodox outreach institution], they are a very successful worldwide organisation. We've been on a couple of the seminars ... It's a beautiful setting. They do it in a way, you know, they don't impose – but it's so interesting, and they have an 80% success rate ... [CH: *What is success?*] ... like keeping *Shabbat* and increasing their levels of observance. So it depends on how you pitch it. And I think they certainly could do that here.⁸⁶

It was also argued that one couldn't change the ethos of the schools while the profile of the teachers remained the same. The manager voice quoted below expresses the view that a quick fix was not possible for what Oakes et al (1998) describe as a “third order change” – a change which seeks to reform core normative beliefs of stakeholders about race, class and intelligence; to which I would add religion:

Look, from [the CEO's] point of view, he would like to see the school obviously being more religious, and he's pushing that way wherever he can. And it's one of the things ... because he would like to see things happening much quicker, whereas on a realistic basis, the teachers we've got are the same. Some of the teachers are more religious – some are not. So if your teacher base is the same, then things can't change as quickly as you would like them to change.⁸⁷

Sarason maintains that '*we do not become aware of the social change until it hits us in the face, long after the seeds of change have sprouted*' (1998;29). Based on that, I would like to make two observations. First, the restructuring had alerted the community to changes that were already there. Once they became more visible they could begin to dominate even more the common sense of the community and thus encourage more religious behaviour. At the same time, the antagonistic feelings towards the fundamentalist undertone of the restructuring and the visibility of the changes brought some resistance to the process, even from those who would have been more accepting of greater religiosity under different circumstances. Thus, the fragile consensus based on incremental changes with the schools' relative autonomy had been replaced by conflict and contention, and by the assertion of greater centralised control. This created polarisation and dichotomies, and the exclusion of those who did not adhere to the ideological change.

Second, in spite of the perception that the schools had not changed much, the rhetoric of greater religiosity attracted more observant pupils to the schools. This could eventually change the culture and the ethos of the schools and act as a self-

⁸⁶ Teacher, 27 March 2003. [Document 70:19 (573:605). Codes: Impact - religious base - no change].

⁸⁷ Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:27 (559:568). Codes: Restructuring - quick fix].

fulfilling prophecy. Moreover, the cost-cutting exercise of the restructuring shifted funds that were designated to upgrading the educational as well as the social needs of the schools, towards those structures that would eventually influence the religious base of the schools. One can glean these changes from the following citation:

So I think that we have more observant children in the school and I think through our procuring of one or two very good teachers – rabbis in fact – we have two rabbis on the campus – there are more *shiurim* (religious lessons), there are more lunchtime *shiurim* going on, but the school as a whole has not become further “right”.⁸⁸

The teacher quoted below also maintained that the changes were subtle but that their accumulated effect signified a definite change in the religious ethos of the schools. She also referred to the retirement of the Linksfield High School principal, who represented a more liberal approach:

It’s the end of an era. There’s not even a chance that you can look at the school and say it’s the same. I think [the director] brought a certain tone into the schools, being a rabbi and being more religious. I think Jewish Studies improved under him ... But I can see now that [the principal of the high school] has left and that [the CEO] is in charge – that all of a sudden you are feeling – they have done away with fashion shows – now there is a problem with the *Bat-Mitzvah* ... and all of a sudden all of the things that have been fine for 50 years, are suddenly being thrown out, and all the time you hear people saying – but we are not a *yeshiva*. And now a change of uniform – wanting to have a more conservative uniform ... they don’t want the girls to sing on stage if they are over 12. You know – this never happened at King David.⁸⁹

It appears that instead of continuing with the evolutionary but rather slow cultural change process towards greater religiosity, the CEO aimed at a radical change that would turn around not only the financial situation but also the ideological and educational base of the schools. This required visible changes, such as reducing and diluting the Hebrew Department and strengthening the Jewish Studies Department, changing the uniform and introducing new teachers into the schools who would feel comfortable with these kinds of changes. The narrative shows that the CEO was applying similar tactics in the schools to those practiced by outreach programmes, aimed at destabilising the identity and reconstructing a new, instant identity. Given enough time, the managerial control over the community schools could enable the CEO to lock in the pupils and their families and to expose them to extremist views, thereby shaping the Jewish identity of the community.

⁸⁸ Manager, 17 March 2003. [Document 69:39 (989:1002). Codes: Impact - religious base - has already been changed].

⁸⁹ Other stakeholder, 23 May 2002. [Document 12:19 (330:351). Codes: Impact - religious base].

‘What is the difference between God and the CEO? God does not think he is the CEO’⁹⁰

It is instructive to note that all stakeholders, whatever their understanding of the restructuring may have been, felt no ownership of the process. It was perceived as an authoritative and autocratic top-down restructuring. It seems that the lay leaders gave the CEO the ultimate power to shape the Jewish community schools. One respondent succinctly summed it up: *‘He is doing whatever he wants to do, as he sees fit, according to a tune in his own mind, and none of us know what the tune is’*.⁹¹

Stakeholders perceived the process of the restructuring as a coercive and intimidating one, which excluded any consultations or discussions. It was perceived that the CEO was accountable to no one. The following extracts from recorded consultations with the CEO are examples of the bullying and threatening manner in which the CEO planned to proceed with the restructuring:

That’s all I’m telling the principals. You have an option – do you want to fight me? I am a fighter. If you want to join me and do it together with me, that’s the way we’ve got to do it. The goal is clear. I made it clear – what we are trying to achieve – cost savings, etc. And if they go, for example – one of the heads of department criticised me yesterday in class, saying that I am scrapping extra lessons. In the end that person will look like a big idiot. All he is going to do is make himself into an idiot, because in due course the parents will know the truth. The kids will know the truth, and the teacher will look like a lazy blighter.⁹²

What I am asking everybody to do, and I said it to the principals – be positive, you know the need, you know the necessity. There are two ways of doing it. The one is a scorched earth policy, where you burn the place. In the end, by the way, the grass comes out greener. And I’m not scared. I am saying it. I am not scared. I don’t want it ...⁹³

Except for brief presentations, the CEO hardly visited the schools and most of the directives were announced on Fridays before school closed or on the last day of term before the CEO left his office, leaving the school community to struggle alone with the decrees. An acting vice-principal was dismissed without following any proper procedure, and as the school was closing to celebrate the festival of Passover. Stakeholders’ phone calls, letters and faxes went mostly unanswered. Instead of negotiating and explaining his actions to the stakeholders, the CEO resorted to

⁹⁰ Journal entry, 22 March 2002. [Document 55:933 (7719:7721). Codes: CEO - ultimate power].

⁹¹ Manager, 1 July 2002. [Document 36:37 (1626:1628). Codes: Restructuring - hidden agenda].

⁹² Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:144 (3874:3889). Codes: CEO - coercive].

⁹³ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:108 (3992:4019) Codes: CEO - dealing with resistance].

bullying strategies, including ridiculing the past, discouraging critics and direct threats. Sending threatening “military-type” letters was the chosen management style:

... No expenditure will be incurred for capital or other items ... All purchases must be approved by head office before they are incurred. The procedure for this will be communicated to you in due course. Failure to comply with this will result in the Board refusing to pay for such expenditure.⁹⁴

Any car that is parked either in the wrong place or in non-demarcated areas may be clamped and the driver subjected to a disciplinary hearing.⁹⁵

There was a letter that [the principal] didn't want to distribute. And [the CEO] phoned [the principal] up and he said: ‘You will distribute that letter – if not, you will be here on a disciplinary hearing and your job is on the line’.⁹⁶

Most stakeholders rejected this type of change process, but not all of them. A teacher voice argued that with the failure of democracy, strong autocratic management was needed. Her reference to “too much democracy” is indicative of Ultra Orthodoxy’s attack on egalitarian norms and values, which are seen as one of the major causes for the decline in values. However, since she is aware that “Jews need to feel that they are being consulted”, she recommended that it was necessary to give stakeholders the illusion of participation without really considering their views:

You know that the one thing that [the CEO] has made quite clear, is that he is autocratic, but it needed that kind of leadership ... Because we’ve had wonderful democracies in the past at the school, but it hasn’t worked. And I’m not saying that there shouldn’t be consultation. And I think he should do more of that. He should respect the opinions and the needs of the parents. ... And I think with Jewish leadership, it’s always very difficult because everyone wants to have a say. And they feel very affronted if they are not consulted – but as [the principal] says, what you’ve got to do, you’ve got to be clever and you’ve got to say ‘I’m consulting you’, but at the end do what you want to do anyway.⁹⁷

It seems that the CEO was his own worst enemy who could not make an ally even among those who may have supported him:

But what I am saying is, I said it earlier, two-thirds of what the man is doing I believe in. Does he know what type of an ally he has got in me? Does he know what type of an ally he has got in the teachers at the schools and the parents? Work with us, don’t tell us, work with us and help us work with you and together we will create it.⁹⁸

All of a sudden I was teaching 41 lessons a week [from 32] ... And we were told if we don’t fit in, take it or leave it. So everything was done with threats – and with threats of disciplinary action. And I think we felt as teachers if we would have been

⁹⁴ Memorandum from [CEO] to principals, directors, heads of department, 3 May 2001.

⁹⁵ Letter to all members employed by the SABJE, 15 January 2002.

⁹⁶ Other stakeholder, 10 January 2002. [Document 7:64 (1371:1380). Codes: CEO - coercive].

⁹⁷ Teacher, 27 March 2003. [Document 70:23 (662:684). Codes: Restructuring - top-down].

⁹⁸ Manager 26 June 2002. [Document 28:32 (929:949). Codes: Restructuring - top-down].

approached and the situation explained – there’s something called “Jewish guilt” – people fit in, and people go the extra mile.⁹⁹

The manager voice quoted below expressed the view that change could not happen without buy-in from the stakeholders and without understanding the culture of the schools and the context of change:

If they made me the CEO of Nedbank – I wouldn’t go in and within the first week, change the whole of Nedbank. I would spend six months studying Nedbank – studying the culture of Nedbank – going and asking people questions. Sitting, listening, looking. And then you start ... You can’t build something that people don’t want, because nobody’s going to go there. And this is the issue.¹⁰⁰

Interestingly, in the next passage the same manager articulates Foucault’s (1991) ideas about governmentality and the art of leadership:

I still think in today’s world, if you look at new management styles all over the world, it’s all about consultation. It’s all about making people feel that they are part of the process, because as soon as you alienate people, especially people who are in middle management, you lose their loyalty. They don’t feel any more – I mean – the art of being a good leader is making other people feel that they made the decisions.¹⁰¹

This implies that stakeholders could have been satisfied with the *impression* of consultation rather than with meaningful participation. The CEO maintained that in the first month he ‘*had no less than 40 extensive consultative meetings with the principals, teachers, employee forum, administrative staff and parents*’.¹⁰² However, teachers and principals experienced it quite differently, as the following quotations demonstrate:

We were not part of any decision, it just “hits” us, and even in the Hebrew [department] he did not enable us to express our opinions, in our field of expertise. It was always his opinion, and he lays down the rules; like when he decided that in Grade 1 we don’t teach reading anymore. And it did not help what we said, that it is important, and there is no reason for that ...¹⁰³

To discuss? We don’t discuss anything. Nothing is discussed. If it’s a three-hour meeting, two hours and fifty-nine minutes – we are told. There’s no discussion. There’s no room for any kind of – not dissension, or disagreement, or negotiation, or taking it from whoever’s got the experience within their particular field. The decisions have already been made and they are just presented to us as a *fait accompli*. And then of course everything turns around, because when it comes down, and we don’t accept it, we don’t do it. Or we dig in our heels. And then of course it turns itself around completely and he’s got to keep on taking a step back. Instead of first

⁹⁹ Teacher, 9 January 2003. [Document 53:9 (270:275). Codes: Process - managed badly and indecently].

¹⁰⁰ Manager, 27 August 2002. [Document 42:21 (563:590). Codes: CEO - approach to change].

¹⁰¹ Manager, 27 August 2002. [Document 42:13 (332:345). Codes: CEO - does not know how to implement change].

¹⁰² New CEO for SABJE. *Davidian Star*. July 2001.

¹⁰³ Teacher, 14 May 2002. [Document 3:228 (272:279). Codes: Restructuring - top-down].

discussing it where it should be discussed – come to the right decision as a group of people who have to administer whatever it is that he wants, he makes the decision and then all hell breaks loose. And if he's got to put it on hold or he's got to back-track, or he's got to – whatever. And then he accuses you of mismanagement and inciting people. And there's nothing that you can even discuss with the staff any more – because the minute you go and discuss it, you've broken confidentiality. But what confidentiality when you are the last to know, and all of this has been already discussed at various levels with different people here, there and everywhere.¹⁰⁴

When I challenged one of the managers that he seemed to be taking many decisions by himself without consulting the CEO, I was told that:

In truth, no one can actually go ahead with a decision without it being rubber-stamped. So automatically a huge amount of power, creativity, etc., is taken away from the schools ... No teacher will do anything without first having it rubber-stamped because they are so scared – they are scared to do something that won't be okayed.¹⁰⁵

There was a perception that the CEO would only work with yes-men. The manager quoted above felt compromised and coerced, but conceded that he had *'to be a Yes person, unless [he] wants to actually leave'*.¹⁰⁶

If the CEO was indeed consulting, he did not consult with those he should have been consulting with. For example, educational decisions were first explored with the administrative staff:

You know it was quite funny, [the human resources manager] said to me that [the CEO] said to her, 'What do you think of a middle school [idea]?' She likes it, you know, and I thought, well why is he asking her first; surely he should ask educators? But I left it, I didn't say anything to her ... How do these people who are theoretically only secretaries or secretarial staff or admin staff have more say over how the whole institution is going to run than the people at grass roots? And that is the scary thing.¹⁰⁷

I think he just doesn't communicate with anyone outside of certain chosen people because the Board is marginalised as well. I am on the Board and most of the decisions never really came to the Board either.¹⁰⁸

The only public context at which some negotiations took place was the Employee Forum, where the ill-informed representatives had to bargain with the CEO who had the constant assistance of a highly paid labour lawyer as his main negotiator. The representatives were helpless, as one member of the Employee Forum explained:

¹⁰⁴ Manager, 2 July 2002. [Document 6:105 (335:366). Codes: Restructuring - top-down].

¹⁰⁵ Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:35 (683:703). Codes: CEO - ultimate power; CEO vs. principals].

¹⁰⁶ Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:65 (1102:1133). Codes: CEO - works with yes men].

¹⁰⁷ Teacher, 17 July 2002. [Document 35:62 (1632:1639). Codes: Promotion; Restructuring - consultation].

¹⁰⁸ Honorary officer, 16 July 2002. [Document 26:10 (215:219). Codes: Lay leaders - CEO relationship].

None of us fight [the termination of perks] because we haven't got the money and we haven't got [the knowledge] and we haven't got – in truth there are a lot of teachers there who are so desperate for their jobs, they are breadwinners, they cannot afford to be without this and so they just accept anything that is dumped on them. And he keeps threatening us, 'You want your long leave, that's fine, I'll declare the school insolvent and close the doors' ... that is all I hear. All he says to us at the E Forum meetings is, 'then I'll close the school'.¹⁰⁹

Certain respondents pointed out the difficulty of consultation in a complex organisation. One manager attributed this to the different interests and agendas of the stakeholders:

I know he did talk about transparency, I know but maybe it is not possible in this situation. Because what I have found is that there is so much resistance that if you try to be transparent you get trampled. You know, you almost have to do things surreptitiously to get anything accomplished.¹¹⁰

Despite the perceived lack of consultation and the fact that the CEO hardly visited the schools, the stakeholders felt he was aware of every move they made. Classrooms or private meetings, even among parents, were no longer safe places where stakeholders could express their feelings without the knowledge of the CEO. The CEO admittedly was using informants to “spy” on the community:

If a person says something to x, the chances of it not getting back to me are nil. For one reason, I'm networked ... within the Jewish community, in terms of the work I've been doing, I've got a lot of contacts.¹¹¹

The use of informants created an environment of deception, suspicion and distrust. It negatively affected relationships between the teachers and between the principals, as the following citations will demonstrate:

We always talk about snitches in our departments you know, in our meetings. Everyone's always saying – now who's going to report to him? Who is the person that reported it? It never happened before.¹¹²

There's no cooperation [among the principals] because the vibe around it, or the *modus operandi* around the new regime, is to divide and rule. So he plays one principal off against another. We are actually too scared to even talk to one another, because we don't know how he gets the information. He gets the information before we've even blinked an eye ... That's what scares me. But it's really very frightening. So we very seldom speak to one another now. We used to meet quite regularly.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Teacher, 29 April 2002. [Document 27:20 (574:586). Codes: Teachers - accept rationalisation].

¹¹⁰ Manager, 28 May 2002. [Document 5:55 (792:818). Codes: Restructuring - no transparency].

¹¹¹ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:142 (3850:3874). Codes: CEO - uses informants].

¹¹² Other stakeholder, 12 July 2002. [Document 24:16 (440:452). Codes: Teachers - relationship with colleagues].

¹¹³ Manager, 2 July 2002. [Document 6:51 (729:741). Codes: CEO - uses informants; Principals - cooperation during restructuring].

The lay leaders who supported the CEO denied that there was a lack of consultation and passed it off as a *'problem with communication'*.¹¹⁴ The next quotation is quite telling, whereby a lay leader argued that there was a definite process of consultation, not realising that what had been described was a clear authoritative top-down process:

We've just had a whole issue with the salaries. It was properly consulted and whatever. [We] were called to a meeting with the executive staff [of the high school], without [the CEO] being present. And we listened to all their gripes, and whatever and whatever. Wrote it all down and took it back to [the CEO], and thank God, I think we more or less sorted out the issue. But what was fascinating was, at the end of the conversation I said to [the principal], I said: 'I just want to ask you one thing. All this that you are telling me now, do you mean to tell me that in all this, [the CEO] never ever called you in and consulted with you, *and told you what was going to happen, and for you to pass on the information?*' And I knew I caught him out ... But he didn't have the guts to take it on to his staff. So that's what I'm saying – that you have a – in my opinion, in one sentence – you have a combination of a lack of leadership and you have, on the other side, an unacceptability of change.¹¹⁵ (My emphasis.)

The above extract reveals other processes that were taking place. It shows that the power and control of the organisation was completely in the hands of the CEO. The lay leaders – who actually appointed him and were supposed to be the guardians of the Jewish community schools – were reduced to “write it all down and take it back to the CEO”. It also demonstrates that the lay leaders were not taking responsibility for the failing process but rather blaming the “implementation dip” on people’s inability to change and on the lack of leadership at school level. Criticism was silenced and strong threatening letters were sent from the Manco members to those who resisted the restructuring.¹¹⁶ This indicates that bullying tactics permeated the schools and had become the norm.

Indeed, many stakeholders began to use the authority of the CEO to expand their own authority. Parents threatened teachers, teachers threatened pupils and managers bullied teachers. One manager maintained that even though she lost the strongest teachers in her department, she was much happier since it had become easier to control her staff. If teachers did not toe the line there was always the threat of a

¹¹⁴ Manco member, 7 March 2003. [Document 65:23 (815:822). Codes: Restructuring - no communication].

¹¹⁵ Manco member, 20 August 2002. [Document 41:12 (346:375). Codes: CEO - instructions misinterpreted by messengers; Principals - role during restructuring].

¹¹⁶ Private letters observed.

disciplinary hearing. Another manager was quite candid when she admitted, *'If I want anything done all I have to say is [the CEO] says!'*¹¹⁷

In response to the bullying, teachers resorted to gossip and complaining. The CEO often used the religious notion of slander – *lashon ha'ra* (literally, evil tongue) – in order to try and stop the rumours. In what has been described jokingly by one respondent as a *'Churchill stuff-up'*,¹¹⁸ the CEO declared war on gossip and negativity:

Let us guard our tongues and spread a message of positivism about our school. Whether it is in the car park, on the steps or on the beach we will never surrender to spread our feeling of enthusiasm. Let us remind each other of this undertaking, and if we have to complain let us remember that abuse achieves little.¹¹⁹

To sum up, the evidence shows that the CEO surrounded himself with like-minded people, or at least with people whom he could control. At the same time it also shows the limits of coercive, top down processes as stakeholders “dug in their heels” and the CEO had to retract his decisions. Lack of respect for dissenting voices is one of the reasons identified by Fullan (2001) for the implementation dip. In this change process the problem of implementation was blamed on the stakeholders’ resistance to change and on “those few negative people” who incited others against the changes. An environment of fear, deception and suspicion was spreading. Coercion, threats and bullying tactics were used to gain control over the schools. This all resulted in fragmentation and in a low-trust community in which stakeholders were constantly looking over their shoulders.

'If you can prove that everything's rotten, then you can do whatever you want when it comes to change'¹²⁰

As the school community was struggling with the emotions of fear and loss, there was much occupation with finding the reasons for the restructuring; in other words, with finding who was to be blamed for the crisis. While Chapter 3 identified numerous compound reasons for the Jewish community schools’ predicament, the data indicates that in the perceptions of most respondents there were two main reasons for the crisis: the one was mismanagement, corruption and nepotism, mostly at Board level; and the

¹¹⁷ Manager, 25 June 2002. [Document 17:76 (935:943). Codes: Stakeholders - using the CEO authority to improve their own].

¹¹⁸ Other stakeholder 23 May 2002. [Document 12:156 (1793:1799). Codes: Metaphors].

¹¹⁹ Message from CEO. *Davidian Star*, April 2002.

¹²⁰ Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:72 (1195:1218). Codes: CEO - throw away the past].

other reason was the deterioration in the quality of leadership, both lay and professional.

It was maintained that because of emigration, the community had lost many of its potential leaders. The people who were left to manage the community schools were not always the right ones for the job:

Primary to this situation is probably that we did not have adequate leadership – people who were not able to control situations were placed in areas of high responsibility and ... it was just assumed they would cope with the situation. And they share some of the blame perhaps, but I'm not sure it's a fair blame that they carry because it was too high an expectation. Part of this problem came about because of emigration. We were short of people to appoint. The search possibilities were not adequately done.¹²¹

Another interviewee agreed that the leadership had deteriorated but he perceived it to be a process that had developed over the years as the Board became dominated by parents rather than by community leaders. He argued that community schools need entrepreneurs with vision and not accountants:

To establish something like a [Jewish community school] you need people who are not too concerned whether there is enough money to invest in education. Because according to all the realistic assessments, when they established KD there was nothing ... They were no professionals like accountants, they were businessmen ... If 50 years ago the people who established KD were the types of people who manage KD today, not only today, but also 10 years ago, KD would not have been established.¹²²

The deterioration in the quality of lay leadership was also explained by the gradual professionalisation of the Board, which replaced the type of '*management system that depended on the full-time honorary chairman who gave his life and soul to it, and when he wasn't available, it tended to collapse*'.¹²³ The chairpersons over the past decades had become increasingly reliant on the professional officers. So when the crisis hit the schools, these lay leaders tended to blame the professional officers for the loss:

We [lay leaders] weren't even aware of the extent of the crisis. To a large degree, unfortunately, it was masked by the structure that was in place. And to a large degree they [the professional members] – you know – steered their own ship with very little oversight from the lay leadership of the Board of Education. So when you've got complaints – person A is hardly ever at work – what were you actually supposed to do about it? ... That was the function of the general director, and the general director

¹²¹ Community leader, 8 May 2002. [Document 10:11 (163:173). Codes: Reason - leadership not adequate].

¹²² Community leader, 24 April 2002. [Document 15:14 (183:200). Codes: Reason - leadership not adequate; Lay leaders - selection of Board members].

¹²³ Community leader, 18 July 2002. [Document 23:17 (371:374). Codes: Reason - leadership not adequate].

was just as guilty as I think the rest of the staff in abusing their positions at the Board. The Board was held in very low esteem by the schools. That was my opinion. Rightly or wrongly – very difficult to say.¹²⁴

It is safe to say that most stakeholders agreed with the perception that the financial crisis was caused by the mismanagement and corrupt handling of money by the professional officers of the Board:¹²⁵

I would say 70% of the problem at least, if not more, came from extravagance at the Board. I'm telling you, I am convinced of it. What did he [the director] need to drive – with all due respect – a R300 000 car for, to transport his family around? Look, wide knowledge I don't know...¹²⁶

Now [the administrative director] is one of the gentlemen who has been fingered as having his finger in the cash register. He's one of them ... [The director] totally abused the system. You know, like his wife was employed at the Board, got a good salary, and was never there – kind of thing ...¹²⁷

I think there was terrible abuse of money, especially at Board level. Squandering. ... I think that people got cars who shouldn't have got cars. There was an abuse of cell phones. There were too many trips to Israel. There were just too many people wandering around, not doing a proper job.¹²⁸

My children have gone through the nursery school, the primary school, the high school, with no facilities being improved over the many, many, many years, unless the PTA's improved them. And why? Because everybody was sitting on the Board. The Board got bigger than the entire teaching staff virtually. So many people had their hands in the till. This one was having alterations done at their houses – this is the gospel truth. I know. Their credit cards were used off the Board. Their cell phones were coming from the Board. Their cars were coming from the Board ... It's a scandal that should have been exposed, and instead they ... came to some agreement – that they let them go quietly and everybody kept quiet.¹²⁹

The evidence shows that the CEO and selected honorary officers encouraged these perceptions, thereby creating the image of the CEO as the “hero”, and the professional officers as the “anti heroes”. The CEO publicly referred to the professional officers as the *'fat cats in the White House'*.¹³⁰ The “gravy train” became another popular metaphor.¹³¹ However, no details were given; no charges were laid. When I asked the

¹²⁴ Lay leader, 13 August 2002. [Document 45:18 (443:461). Codes: Reason - leadership not adequate].

¹²⁵ This seems to be the most prevalent perception among teachers, managers and parents. Lay leaders, community leaders and other stakeholders tended to speak about the deterioration of leadership without reference to corruption.

¹²⁶ Other stakeholder, 12 July 2002. [Document 24:47 (889:900). Codes: Reason - squandering].

¹²⁷ Parent, 14 August 2002. [Document 40:96 (1897:1903). Codes: Reason - squandering].

¹²⁸ Manager, 21 April 2002. [Document 4:21 (224:231). Codes: Reason - squandering].

¹²⁹ Parent, 30 July 2002. [Document 48:10 (149:219). Codes: Reason - squandering].

¹³⁰ Is Transformation in King David Possible – Is the Future Secure? 11 August 2002, Second Innings, Emmerentia.

¹³¹ This image was repeated to me in many casual conversations and interviews.

Manco members about these insinuations I usually received vague answers such as: *'There were things that members of the professional management did, I would rather not go down that lane'*.¹³²

During consultations with the CEO, the professional officers challenged him on these accusations and asked him whether they were going to be held accountable for the financial loss. His answer was vague but threatening:

There are certain things that have occurred that I believe without question, could be challenged and attacked and brought to disciplinary hearings. I am telling you now. I'm not going to go into it. Some people know what some of these things are. But I can tell you now there have been some actions, and if anybody in the end wants me to, at some stage, I can proceed on that basis. I have chosen not to. But there are issues that certainly indicate that performance is most lacking ... I said to the Board that I am not in favour of a forensic audit, and I'm not in favour of a witch-hunt ...¹³³

When I pressed respondents to reveal their sources of information regarding the alleged squandering and corruption at Board level, it became clear that some was based on assumed first-hand knowledge, some on unsubstantiated rumours, and some of it seemed to have been spread by certain members of the Board:

Interviewee: The money was lost by certain individuals on the Board, so in fact the whole SABJE was responsible for the debt, not the teachers' salaries ...

CH: *What are you referring to?*

Interviewee: I'm saying they should have made those individuals accountable for the loss. If necessary, prosecuted them. The money was stolen from the Board.

CH: *How do you know?*

Interviewee: I was told by [the vice-chairperson] ...

CH: *And do you have any evidence?*

Interviewee: I don't have any factual evidence, but I was told by her and it was hinted at by [the CEO] ...¹³⁴

There were also those stakeholders who believed that blaming the professional officers of the Board for stealing was merely a scapegoat, and that there were other reasons for the financial loss:

And there is also this kind of intimation that it was very corrupt before – that people were taking advantage. That there was mismanagement, that there was stealing ... you know, all this kind of, 'Oh the Board has stolen a lot of money'. There was just that general kind of feeling, because I think a lot of people left very quickly. And there was talk of cell phones, and credit cards, and cars and travel allowances. Look,

¹³² Manco member, 5 August 2002. [Document 16:29 (495:502). Codes: Process - dismissing the previous Board].

¹³³ Recorded consultation with CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:147 (977:1044). Codes: Reason - squandering].

¹³⁴ Parent, 14 August 2002. [Document 40:51 (970:986). Codes: Reason - squandering].

its nice to have ‘whipping boys’. It’s nice to say, ‘oh it was the Board’s fault’. My feeling was that they let too many kids be subsidised without really looking into.¹³⁵

Certain stakeholders were uncomfortable with the rumours machinery. They felt that there was not enough clarity on these sensitive issues that affected people’s lives and reputation, and that spreading blame and accusation is morally wrong. Moreover, it encouraged an environment of suspicion and hate:

And there were also stories that [the director] is responsible for some of the problems. I don’t know if it is true or not, they never really check the stories, and I said to them it is wrong, if you have something serious against [the director] you must verify it.¹³⁶

We were told by [the CEO] about all the misdemeanours that had been performed by the previous professional officers of the Board. And I felt that as a community organisation, we had some responsibility to inform our stakeholders, who are our constituents, about what had happened ... [The Management Committee members] were so aggressive in running down and destroying people for all their wrongdoings, but they were equally aggressive in not allowing me to express a view that maybe we need to communicate it to our community. So I’m beginning to doubt whether it was actually true or not true¹³⁷

The professional officers of the Board were dismissed with very little resistance from the various stakeholders. With the repeated accusations and blame there was a feeling among the school community that ‘*they deserved it*’.¹³⁸ One respondent was trying to explain this seemingly “uncaring” attitude as a survival mechanism:

Because intrinsically each one of those principals only worried about his little domain, and they thought that ‘*if he [the CEO] will tackle the Board ... he won’t touch us*’ and we will be able to continue to operate our schools as we have up to now. All of them think that they have a perfect school – which they don’t. They all think that they run excellent schools – they run good schools, but there is still a lot to be desired. And so only until it started hitting them, then [the CEO] became the real [bad man] ... let the Board go – poor [so and so]... but they didn’t lose sleep over it. When it suited them afterwards, they could say to [the CEO] – ‘but hang on – so and so used to deal with this, and so and so used to deal with that’¹³⁹ (My emphasis.)

The notion that “if the CEO will tackle them, he wouldn’t touch us” was repeated throughout the restructuring in different forms. This preoccupation with personal or institutional survival questioned the whole sense of community and the discourse of care, and resulted in further fragmentation and loss of trust.

¹³⁵ Other stakeholder, 23 May 2002. [Document 12:127 (1439:1451). Codes: Reason - squandering].

¹³⁶ Community leader, 24 April 2002. [Document 15:17 (242:248). Codes: Reason - squandering].

¹³⁷ Honorary officer, 15 August 2002. [Document 33:11 (364:388). Codes: Reason - squandering].

¹³⁸ Other stakeholder, 12 July 2002. [Document 24:47 (910). Codes: Reason - squandering].

¹³⁹ Other stakeholder, 15 July 2002. [Document 25:41 (940:962). Codes: Previous Board - dismissal].

After the professional officers were retrenched and out of the way, it was announced that the pupil:teacher ratio was the '*single biggest contributor to the losses*'¹⁴⁰ and the process of rationalisation of teachers' workloads began.

It's just not acceptable ... Government schoolteachers have generally been doing 46 periods in a 50 [hour] week. I don't want to specify what some of our teachers are doing. It's ludicrous. I just came from one school where the staff room was full the whole time I was there, from beginning to end, with people sitting and chatting.¹⁴¹

Some teachers felt guilty. One teacher agreed that they were spoilt and really needed a '*shake-up*'.¹⁴² Another teacher likewise agreed that teachers were very comfortable and that there was lack of control:

Because people – it has been too long in coming ... that is why everybody is screaming, it is very comfortable working in a place where nobody questions what you are doing and you get on with what you are doing and those who duck and dive, duck and dive¹⁴³

The teacher quoted below disagreed. She maintained that teachers were made to take responsibility for the corruption and the mismanagement of the Board:

There was a lot of mismanagement at the top. There really was. There was no question about it. But, who's borne the brunt, has been the teachers – and the teachers had nothing to do with it. And that has been our biggest gripe, is that we have borne the brunt.¹⁴⁴

One teacher likewise maintained that instead of being made to feel a part of the restructuring, she was made to feel the '*cause of the problem*'.¹⁴⁵ This created a significant attitude change within the staff towards the new regime and towards the schools. Inside the staff room the secular teachers tended to blame the Hebrew teachers '*who were always seen to not have as many periods*' compared to the secular teachers.¹⁴⁶

The teachers were further undermined when the CEO criticised them at public meetings and described them as lazy with not enough working hours – hence the financial debt – who are paid for extra lessons that parents, as customers, are entitled

¹⁴⁰ New CEO for SABJE. *Davidian Star*, July 2001.

¹⁴¹ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:57 (1691:1719). Codes: KD vs. government schools; Teachers - not working hard enough].

¹⁴² Teacher, 24 October 2002. [Document 49:26 (911:919). Codes: Teachers - not working hard enough].

¹⁴³ Teacher, 17 July 2002. [Document 35:34 (885:899). Codes: Teachers - not working hard enough].

¹⁴⁴ Teacher, 9 January 2003. [Document 52:11 (350:355). Codes: Teachers - blamed for financial loss].

¹⁴⁵ Teacher, 27 May 2002. [Document 14:12 (331:343). Codes: Process of change - approaches to change].

¹⁴⁶ Teacher, 17 July 2002. [Document 35:71 (202:230). Codes: Reason - nepotism].

to get for free and that *'as the bell rings at the end of the day there is a danger that children will get trampled by the teachers rushing to leave'*.¹⁴⁷

More insulting to the teachers was the enthusiastic clapping from the majority of parents as they cheered the CEO. One parent tried to rationalise the support that the CEO received from the parents:

The parents inevitably see it when it doesn't work, they don't see what is working ... Their experience is that teachers are very reluctant to go the extra mile ... They agreed with that perception, yes. I think it was wrong of him to play to that. But he was playing to a gallery. I mean, he knew he was playing to win the support of parents to do what he was doing, so he gave them what they wanted.¹⁴⁸

The CEO eventually extended the blame to all the stakeholders. In the following extract, however, he sounded less like a rational manager analysing the reasons for the financial crisis, and more like a fundamentalist preacher calling the audience to repent:

And I can tell you even the Board themselves last night, were digging deep into their souls to ask how [the crisis] happened and who is to blame, and bear the culpability, and some of the members expressed the feeling that they had culpability. And you ask: 'Is that strange?'. But I think it's a big step forward when everybody starts to say, 'we played a role' – by omission, by commission, by neglect, by whatever. I'm not talking about the Board, I'm talking throughout the system. If we would reach the stage where everybody admits – 'we have a degree of culpability' – I think we would be far on the way to solving it ... When you admit that things are wrong, and you admit you played a role in it, then things start to improve. It's not punishment – it's part of the process. Many of the headmasters at this stage still believe they have no culpability at all. And the one issue of staff loads, which is directly their responsibility, even that they will blame on the people in this room [the professional officers] – to say they were not told to have these loads. And I say, oooo, you claim to be such a leading educationist who knows what's going on – you yourself have culpability. Many of the headmasters admit to me – 'we have known all along that the system is incorrect'. A parent last night said to me that his wife worked in the system. He said every year his wife came home with a bonus. It was comfortable. It was comfortable, but you see those who admit it was comfortable, are starting to admit a degree of culpability.¹⁴⁹

It is evident that the destabilising effects caused by saturating the environment with feelings of blame and guilt allowed the CEO to apply his "scorched earth policy" to all areas of the organisation. He began with the professional officers, continued with the teachers and eventually attacked all the past achievements and ethos of the schools:

¹⁴⁷ Parent, 16 July 2002. [Document 26:39 (820:868). Codes: Restructuring - creating distrust between teachers and parents].

¹⁴⁸ Parent, 16 July 2002. [Document 26:41 (842:854). Codes: CEO - playing one against the other].

¹⁴⁹ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:120 (4336:4369). Codes: Reason - no accountability].

At a later stage – I don't want to mix it up with the restructuring – I can tell you now, I will challenge our success within our ethos. I will set criteria and we can measure them together, and I can tell you any thinking person who looks at our success, has to agree with me that we have failed.¹⁵⁰

In the following quotation one respondent described one of the methods by which this was done:

When I gave a report [to the Board] about the state of [the subject] in the schools ... I was told by [the CEO] that you can't put any of those positive things in your report, 'I will have nothing of it – you can only report the negatives side'. So [ex-chairperson] was the one who said at the Board meeting, 'Well, why are you throwing out the baby with the bath water? Surely there was some positive'. And I wasn't allowed, to an extent, to say the positive at that Board meeting ... If you can prove that everything's rotten, then you can do whatever you want when it comes to change.¹⁵¹

I definitely think he's trying to change [the ethos] ... Nothing that came before is anything that worked. Everything according to him is rotten, and he wants to redo it. Even if it comes to the same thing, he wants to redo it.¹⁵²

Stakeholders became confused as the picture of the schools that the CEO was presenting did not match their own "imagined" community school. They were annoyed that an organisation – which had so many positives – was being viewed only from a negative perspective:

I want my school to remain as it is. And it concerned me that he blamed the teachers. He called them lazy. He called the system iniquitous. He said that some of the headmasters had a closed door [policy]. He spoke very badly about [the principal]. He said [other principal] was unapproachable. You know things like that – I said to him, 'But hey, that is not my experience of these people. You are new'.¹⁵³

There was also a strong perception that it was not only the schools that must remain the same but also the community:

You see, we've become emotional and that because it's our community we are talking about – it goes way beyond the school. That's what upset me. It's not just the school we're talking about ...¹⁵⁴

At the same time as the CEO was belittling, blaming and putting the community to shame, he demanded respect for himself and was offended when it was not forthcoming. Respect for authority has been identified by De Ruyter (2001) as one characteristic of fundamentalist education, together with discipline and obedience. In

¹⁵⁰ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:159 (2418:2435). Codes: Process - destabilizing the system].

¹⁵¹ Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:72 (1195:1218). Codes: CEO - throw away the past].

¹⁵² Manager, 15 October 2002. [Document 39:51 (1026:1034). Codes: CEO - throw away the past].

¹⁵³ Parent, 14 August 2002. [Document 40:7 (162:170). Codes: CEO - view of KD].

¹⁵⁴ Other stakeholder, 4 November 2002. [Document 19:66 (1066:1070). Codes: KD - as a community school].

a most noteworthy citation the CEO expressed demand for respect, somehow blurring the difference between the respect demanded by a CEO of an organisation and the respect bestowed on a religious leader:

Although it's a common problem within the King David School ... that there's no sufficient respect ... If, for example, I am invited to a function in my capacity as Chief Executive of the Board ... then you have got to treat me in that fashion ... I can tell you when the Chief Rabbi visits certain institutions that I'm involved with, he is treated with honour in the manner of his position ... But if we have a chief executive, what is a chief executive of the schools? In truth, he's the headmaster's boss ... And I'm not sure that the '*kovod*' (respect) was given to the position¹⁵⁵

In the restructuring of the Jewish community schools the “manufactured uncertainty” discussed in this section began by discrediting the “old” professional officers. This was followed by challenging the academic achievements of the schools, the loyalty and integrity of the teachers and most significantly the ethos of the schools and its mission. At the same time that chaos was created – coupled with feelings of guilt and blame – and the “imagined” community school was put to shame, the CEO was presented as the solution that would bring order and save the schools.

It is obvious that what the restructuring did manage to do was to rip at the heart of the institution, as well as at the hearts of many people who worked there or perceived it as their home. In a most significant citation the teacher voice quoted below explained that in order to cope with the loss and with the emotions of guilt and blame, teachers blocked off their emotions and started to relate to their work as “just a job”. In this new context fabrication and visibility had replaced commitment and authenticity:

You see, in a way, one of the teachers said – it takes away that emotional guilt that we have – a feeling of belonging and over-extending ourselves. We don't have that same kind of commitment – you know – it's a job. And if we are told to do extra lessons [every day] from 1.45–2.15, that's it ... Yes. But we are not touting for business. We are sending out a note in the newsletter saying there will be English on such and such a day and I'm certainly not encouraging children to come.¹⁵⁶

The evidence shows that while the school community experienced the different stages of mourning for the loss of the “imagined” community schools – and by extension the loss of community, as they knew it – the CEO exploited and encouraged the associated feelings of guilt and blame. By directing the blame and guilt to all facets of

¹⁵⁵ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:122 (4391:4430). Codes: Jewish values - respect].

¹⁵⁶ Teacher, 24 April 2002. [Document 2:5 (190:196). Codes: Teachers - compliance].

the organisation, uncertainties were manufactured and enhanced. Bullying and shaming stakeholders into compliance has been identified as a tactic used by new managerialism (Rees, 1995). This had adverse affects on the ethos and moral values of the schools. Stakeholders were turned against each other trying to find someone to blame. This created further fragmentation, division and pain.

It seems that the religious concept of repentance was used to shame the stakeholders into compliance; some of whom obliged by “confessing” to their “imagined” sins. One can identify another synergy between the managerial and the fundamentalist methods of recruiting adherers. As mentioned in Chapter 2, the emotions of uncertainty, shame and guilt benefit both business and fundamentalist groups, as both tend to build themselves on the ruins of human experience.

‘I think that the lesson of how it was done, was not Jewish’¹⁵⁷

One should not assume that the polarisation in the school community was based on the religious–secular conflict. There were those stakeholders who were clearly supportive of making the schools more religious as well as more efficient, but could not separate the means from the ends of such pursuit. I would go so far as to say that many religious stakeholders found it even harder than the secular respondents to reconcile with the restructuring and felt insulted to be grouped with the CEO because of their level of observance. They questioned the morality of the restructuring and perceived it as an antithesis to the Jewish ethos of the schools. This was expressed in phrases such as “it is not Jewish” or “Jews do not behave like that”. One rabbi described the manner in which the CEO handled the school staff as nothing less than a desecration of God.

The criticism of a lack of morality was also directed towards the lay leaders who had brought the CEO into the system by deceitful means. It seemed that many stakeholders were not aware of that part of the process and accepted without questioning the restructuring at Board level, as already indicated in the previous section:

I think that the actual process of the way the restructuring happened, it was very deceitful – it was very underhand. That no one knew what was going on. None of the executive members of the Board knew what was happening, and I think that the way they got [the CEO] into the system, I think was very deceitful ... The [director] knew nothing about it until 20 minutes before he had to set up a meeting. Not even [the

¹⁵⁷ Community leader, 8 May 2002. [Document 10:81 (221). Codes: Process - was not Jewish].

administrative director] or any of the other people who were involved, knew anything about it ... And I think that in itself is a completely disrespectful, denigrating thing to happen ... I think in an age where things like transparency and communication are becoming valued, I think that this was completely the opposite – the adoption of apartheid techniques. You know, people would want to speak about it, or speak up against him, and the next day they lost their jobs or they were threatened that they would lose their jobs if they continued in that way.¹⁵⁸

Certain stakeholders, secular as well as religious, who turned to the Chief Rabbi as the highest moral authority to support them against the ruthless restructuring were disappointed when they realised that the Chief Rabbi *'has sold himself totally out to the [CEO]. You can't go and talk to the Chief Rabbi about these issues, because whatever you say will get repeated to the [CEO]'*.¹⁵⁹ Others believed the Chief Rabbi was *'blinded'* by the CEO and that he did not *'understand the depth of the agenda'*.¹⁶⁰

Stakeholders found it hard to reconcile this support:

You know, and I hope I'm wrong, you know when the Chief Rabbi stood up at Speech Night and said he admires [the CEO's] inimitable skills – and obviously it boosted his ego – because [the CEO] was sitting on the stage as well – I don't know who wants to imitate them.¹⁶¹

Thus while the CEO was preaching for respect, kindness and Jewish values, and for the establishment of *'new rules of morality – new rules of honesty – new rules of commitment'*,¹⁶² those were hardly detected in his deeds. The gap between practice and rhetoric was so great that one manager, herself a member of *Ohr Sameach*, found it necessary to add at the end of the interview:

The only thing I can say, although in many ways he does not act according to the principles of strict Judaism, he is a very religious, very knowledgeable man. He is.¹⁶³

In summary, this section demonstrates that the restructuring lost its moral purpose when the means could not justify the ends. Since the restructuring was identified with an increase in religiosity, the resistance to the restructuring manifested itself in resistance to religion. This resulted in less respect for the religion from a number of “non-observant Orthodox” respondents who maintained that the restructuring was

¹⁵⁸ Manager, 15 October 2002. [Document 39:13 (543:571). Codes: Restructuring - deceitful; Process - intimidation and bullying].

¹⁵⁹ Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:46 (803:817). Codes: Chief Rabbi].

¹⁶⁰ Community leader, 9 April 2003. [Document 74:2 (88:117). Codes: Chief Rabbi].

¹⁶¹ Other stakeholder, 4 November 2002. [Document 19:16 (388:407). Codes: Chief Rabbi].

¹⁶² Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:147 (977:1044). Codes: Reason - squandering].

¹⁶³ Manager, 1 July 2002. [Document 36:38 (1632:1634). Codes: CEO - reputation].

pushing them away from Judaism.¹⁶⁴ Others maintained that since the restructuring they avoid going to synagogues.¹⁶⁵

This section suggests that the secular-religious tension which has fragmented the Israeli society – that so far had not significantly affected the South African context with its unique phenomenon of the non-observant Orthodox Jew – had begun to manifest itself in the local Jewish community. This was in spite of the fact that many religious stakeholders resisted the restructuring as much as their secular counterparts. However, the ideological facet of the change and the crude authoritarianism in the name of religion had pushed people away.

*'It's not just a restructuring – it's a coup d'etat'*¹⁶⁶

With the lack of clear understanding and with the loss of trust in the restructuring, stakeholders had their own perceptions of the trajectory and goal of the change. It was perceived that the lay leaders had abdicated their roles and had sold out the community schools. Respondents spoke about a takeover. Exactly who had taken over the schools was a topic of many discussions and speculations. During my interviews and casual conversations with stakeholders I heard many “conspiracy” theories about the CEO and his hidden agendas. In some stories he was motivated by profit, in others he was motivated by religious fanaticism. Others described him as power hungry and a megalomaniac motivated by the need to carve himself a name in the community:

He keeps on saying it is financial, it is not, he is building himself an empire and he has got the backing of the rabbis ...¹⁶⁷

Certain respondents felt that the CEO was there to destroy the schools, thereby forcing pupils to attend his privately owned colleges. This suspicion became prevalent when he curtailed most of the remedial services at the schools while opening a new private remedial school adjacent to his own college and in the vicinity of King David Linksfield.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Manager, 14 May 2002. [Document 3:160 (1134:1149). Codes: Impact - on secular Jews].

¹⁶⁵ Journal entry. [Document 55:835 (1806:1811). Codes: Impact - on secular Jews].

¹⁶⁶ Manager, 12 July 2002. [Document 24:34 (736:747). Codes: Understanding - coup d'etat].

¹⁶⁷ Manager, 25 June 2002. [Document 11:141 (618:620). Codes: Restructuring - hidden agenda].

¹⁶⁸ See Chapter 7.

There was an opposite perception that the CEO had genuinely come to save the schools with no ulterior motive.¹⁶⁹ In the following quotation the respondent seemed to struggle to understand why others did not perceive the CEO in the same positive light that she seemed to view him:

I don't know how most people feel about [the CEO]. I know that the Board is very impressed because of the finances, they have improved tremendously, but he and I have had quite a few discussions and I do feel that he has the interests of King David at heart. I mean there are people who ... act as if they think he is undermining the system. I actually do not believe any of that. I think he honestly took this on because they were desperate financially, they were being threatened with closure, and I think he thought as a Jewish person, you know, they are asking him to do this, I think he really took it on in an altruistic way. I may be very wrong but that is the impression I get, that he is a realist and he sees that it is not working the way it is and he is trying his best to make it work one way or another ... He sees his job as fixing King David wherever he thinks it needs fixing ... I see him in quite a positive light.¹⁷⁰

When asked, the CEO claimed to be motivated by three factors: '*First – for the challenge, second – because the Chief Rabbi asked [him] to do it and thirdly – because [he] didn't know what [he was] getting into*'.¹⁷¹ It is feasible that the CEO, as well as the unidentified '*top brains and talents in the Jewish community*',¹⁷² were attracted to the managerial discourse of a powerful CEO who could single-handedly save the Jewish community schools by applying managerial solutions (that supposedly gave him a good return when managing schools for profit) to resolve complex economic, ideological, educational and social issues.

Significantly, the notion of the strong CEO creates synergy with the fundamentalist concept of charismatic leadership. This can explain why stakeholders perceived the CEO not as a ruthless manager but as a charismatic fundamentalist leader. His name '*has been on the tip of everybody's tongue for so many months, it's like the Z word – Osama Bin Zulberg*'.¹⁷³ As the process evolved and more incoherent, deceitful and even desperate measures were employed, the community basically demonised the CEO. He was compared *inter alia* to Hitler,¹⁷⁴ Eugene Terreblanche¹⁷⁵ and even to Haman.¹⁷⁶ The Board became known as the Taliban

¹⁶⁹ As was mentioned in the methodology, Chapter 4, the newly promoted administrators as well as certain bankers and donors did not grant me interviews, and a presumably more supportive voice is therefore not reflected in my study.

¹⁷⁰ Manager, 28 May 2002. [Document 5:43 (647:666). Codes: CEO - wants to improve schools].

¹⁷¹ Journal entry, 22 November 2001. [Document 55:934 (8720:8725). Codes: CEO - motivation for taking the job].

¹⁷² Mammoth plan to save King David Schools has been put in place. *SA Jewish Report*, 1 June 2001.

¹⁷³ Teacher, 30 July 2002. [Document 48:24 (541:547). Codes: Metaphors].

¹⁷⁴ Lay leader, 29 July 2002. [Document 47:16 (523:527). Codes: Metaphors].

¹⁷⁵ Parent, 14 August 2002. [Document 40:21 (371:375). Codes: CEO - captivating stakeholders].

headquarters.¹⁷⁷ The strong support that the CEO received from the chairperson and the vice-chairperson gave the trio the label, ‘the Troika’.¹⁷⁸ Not quite the respect that the CEO and the lay leaders might have expected, but it is indicative of the feelings of disempowerment and lack of control that the respondents had experienced.

On the other hand there was a perception that the CEO was the scapegoat rather than the villain who was given the dirty job that nobody else in the community was capable of doing.¹⁷⁹ I started to view him as the *Golem*¹⁸⁰ and wondered when the community leaders would restore him to dust.

In summary, this chapter shows the different levels of understanding of the restructuring. At the first level it was perceived as an economic restructuring that had to happen in order to reorganise the institution along more efficient business lines. The managerial solution, and especially the notion of a strong manager, was generally accepted as the only feasible way to restructure cash-strapped schools. Yet, the data reveals different understanding of what “school as a business” should be like. It also seems that the certainty of the business discourse gave some assurance to stakeholders who felt that no one else is going to help them. These expectations did not materialise and the implementation was perceived as being chaotic, impulsive and irrational. A gap between the official rhetoric and daily practice was observed. Eventually the restructuring was experienced as a ruthless top-down retrenchment process, imbued with religious extremists undertones. It was perceived that religious as well as economic needs took precedence over educational and community needs. This created fragmentation, division, suspicion and a general environment of deception. The CEO was perceived as a fundamentalist leader, rather than as a manager, who was using bullying tactics in order to control the school community. By saturating the environment with feelings of blame and guilt the CEO was able to shame the stakeholders into compliance and to undermine the “imagined” community schools. Once the past was invalidated and a culture of compliance prevailed, a new identity could be reconstructed. The evidence also reveals that with the almost obsessive

¹⁷⁶ In the story of Purim, Haman was a minister in Persia (about 400 BCE) who wanted to exterminate all the Jews. In the Victory Park High School’s adaptation of the Purim story, Haman was the CEO of Shushan (the capital of Persia) who refused to send the Jews of Victory Park to Israel. This was a parody on the exclusion of the school from a tour to Israel.

¹⁷⁷ Other stakeholder, 23 May 2002. [Document 12:158 (1818). Codes: Metaphors].

¹⁷⁸ Lay leader, 15 August 2002. [Document 33:16 (478:486). Lay leaders - Manco; Metaphors].

¹⁷⁹ Teacher, 8 January 2003. [Document 51:25 (696:707). Codes: CEO - henchman].

¹⁸⁰ According to legend, the Rabbi of Prague created a *Golem* to serve him, but was forced to restore him to dust when the *Golem* began to run amok and endanger people’s lives (Encyclopaedia Judaica).

preoccupation with the CEO there was hardly any reference to the broader context within which the restructuring took place.

It seemed that the lay leaders chose a “saviour” and gave him ultimate power in order to save the schools from collapse. This resulted in a leadership without followers and in change without integrity, whereby promises were not fulfilled and negative emotions went uncontrolled. The common phrase was that the restructuring had turned from “crisis management” to the “management of crises”, mostly manufactured by the impulsiveness, lack of a clear road map of the change and the perceived hidden agendas. By the end, the restructuring was perceived as no more than a process that changed those in power rather than one that affected any structures or culture of the schools. Ultimately, the process lost its moral purpose, an essential ingredient in Fullan’s (2001) conception of leadership in times of change. Moral purpose is about *‘both ends and means’* (ibid:13). One can argue that from the Orthodox perspective there was a moral purpose, that is, to encourage religiosity, but it seems that the emphasis was on a narrow interpretation of religion, and that bullying and other deceitful means were employed to achieve this end. Moreover, the hurried way in which the change was implemented targeted only visible and ritualistic elements within the religion rather than its moral values. Fullan maintains that leaders with a deep moral purpose are usually accompanied by a sense of urgency. Leaders in some such cases are in a hurry. Yet if they are in too much of a hurry, they will completely fail, as *‘you cannot bulldoze change’* (ibid:9). Consequently, the restructuring lost all credibility and integrity, even among stakeholders who would have welcomed a turn to religiosity under different circumstances. As a result it created greater polarisation in the community between the religious and the secular Jews.

Vignette 1 below follows one policy from its inception to its conclusion; that is, the process by which the traditional *Bat-Mitzvah* service turned into a graduation ceremony. It describes an ideological change that was autocratically imposed on parents without consultation or open debate. It describes the way in which the tradition of the *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremony – which reflected the tensions within the “broadly national-traditional” character of the schools – was discarded, and how a new policy and new tradition was twisted and pushed to and fro until it reached its illogical conclusion. It also shows some of the deceitful means by which it was implemented. The vignette demonstrates the way financial and religious imperatives

had merged to create fragmentation and suspicion. Most of all it demonstrates that the CEO was not operating alone and that there were factions in the community, such as the Orthodox establishment and the financial elite, that supported his policies, even when these were resisted by most parents.

Vignette 1 - The graduation ceremony

Bat-Mitzvah (literally, daughter of the commandment) is a ceremony that takes place when a girl reaches her 12th or 13th birthday. The concept of a ceremony was introduced by the Reform movement in the 19th century. It later began to appear in some Orthodox circles, but never among the Ultra Orthodox. In the Orthodox tradition the *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremony is held for groups of 12-year-old girls whereby they recite some texts in the synagogue and are blessed by the rabbi. The ceremony has a more traditional than religious connotation. In the Reform temples the girl (at 13) may read from the *Torah* and address the congregation, similar to that of a boy's *Bar-Mitzvah* ceremony.

In the past, the Jewish community schools had organised this ceremony for the girls, which was the highlight of *Grade 7* (the last year of primary school). The ceremony was preceded with a study programme that introduced the girls to Jewish laws and customs, especially those relating to the keeping of a Jewish home. It also included a community service aspect. The programme was run by the Hebrew departments of each primary school, even though in some schools secular teachers helped to organise the ceremony. The ceremony was followed by private celebrations ranging from a modest tea at the girls' houses, to fancy dinner-dance affairs. The inclusion of the Reform girls in this ceremony had always posed a problem for the schools, as the rabbinical establishment was reluctant to allow these girls to participate in the affair. This resulted in some painful consequences and was another example of the ongoing conflict at the schools between democracy and religion, as well as between Reform and Orthodoxy, as discussed in Chapter 3.

Last year we had a head girl. And she's good enough to be head girl but was not good enough to be allowed to take part in the *Bat-Mitzvah*, because the mother is converted Reform. I've always been dead against it. I don't believe that you can have a child in our system and tell them that they are good enough to represent your school, they are good enough to be your head girl, they are good enough for everything that the school requires, but they are not good enough to take part [in the *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremony] and make them feel like an outsider.¹⁸¹

¹⁸¹ Teacher, 16 July 2002. [Document 38:32 (942:970). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah and Reform].

Over the years various attempts were made to resolve this conflict, but no permanent solution had been put into practice. It only affected a relatively small number of girls and was dealt with in a somewhat ad-hoc manner.

In February 2002, the CEO sent a circular to all parents announcing that the *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremony would be discontinued because:

... they have given rise to complaints by, *inter alia*, the South African Union of Progressive Judaism (SAUPJ), in that it was alleged that there was prejudice against certain pupils. After extensive consultation with the Rabbinical Council of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues and also with the SAUPJ, the following proposal was accepted:

- From 2003, the *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremony will be organised by the individual [synagogues], in consultation with ourselves.
- We [the schools] will continue to offer a *Bat-Mitzvah* programme.
- Several congregations have indicated that they are willing to accommodate pupils from outside their congregation, if necessary.¹⁸²

The CEO later admitted that the reason was not so much the pain caused for the Reform girls but a concession to pressure coming from three sources. One pressure came from a Reform donor who was reluctant to donate money to a school that showed prejudice against his congregation. The second pressure came from the Chief Rabbi and *Beth Din* (the Jewish court) who objected to the inclusion of the Reform girls in the ceremony, and the third pressure was from the United Orthodox Synagogues that wanted to control the *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremonies.¹⁸³ Neither the parents, the schools nor the Board were consulted. This unilateral decision was accepted with the usual confusion, distrust and doubts, as the following quotations will demonstrate:

I don't know what is happening now. They said it was the Reform, that that was one of the reasons but I am not sure that this was the reason. We never had major, major issues with the Reform over it, maybe one or two cases, that is why we used to send letters beforehand saying the child needed to be *halachicly* Jewish. I don't think that the reason can only be the Reform issue. The Reform is a very small percentage of the community.¹⁸⁴

Personally I think he [the CEO] changed it because the Reform children were not allowed to go to the *shul*. The Reform parents objected to it. ... To show no discrimination between the Reform and the Orthodox ...¹⁸⁵

So I think that the Board wanted to abandon it from a financial point of view, not from an educational point of view, certainly not from a Jewish point of view.¹⁸⁶

And then I hear now that the *Beth Din* also objected to these non *halachic* girls being in *shul*. But the Ark is never opened. The *torahs* are never taken out. And instead of encouraging these children to be part of that - because there's always the odd chance that they will decide to re-convert again through Orthodox - and they will have gained another opportunity to get them in, but they pushed them aside.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸² To all parents King David Primary Schools, 4 February 2002.

¹⁸³ CEO address to parents, 28 and 29 August 2002.

¹⁸⁴ Other stakeholder, 15 July 2002. [Document 25:20 (432:440). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah and Reform].

¹⁸⁵ Manager, 21 April 2002. [Document 4:84 (817:825). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah and Reform].

¹⁸⁶ Community leader, 8 May 2002. [Document 10:19 (245:265). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah and Reform].

¹⁸⁷ Manager, 2 July 2002. [Document 6:37 (554:586). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah and Reform].

The following stakeholder maintained that the *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremony was stopped to satisfy the Orthodox establishment, which had formed a strange alliance with the Reform for this purpose:

Well you see - what's happening ... basically there is a particular company in Johannesburg, without which various communal institutions cannot manage. ... Because now they've got a crisis, you see. And if they want to keep the major [Reform] donor, then they have to make a few nods in his direction - but he doesn't want to rock the boat all that much, so he's not going to say, 'Well, you know, unless I see three Reform Jews teaching Jewish Studies by next week, I'm pulling my money out'. You know, so it's a bit of a stand-off - so they make the odd concession, but it's very sort of backwards and forwards, because the whole trend in the Orthodox Rabbinic establishment is to become more extreme and fundamentalist all the time. So he's pulling in the one way and they are pulling in the other way, and it gets a bit confused.¹⁸⁸

I think the orthodox *shuls* were saying that they wanted to have these orthodox *Bat-Mitzvahs* in their *shuls* because they felt that this was a way of locking families and children into congregations, which they do for the boys but they have never had the opportunity to do that for the girls, and they actually wanted that.¹⁸⁹

There was another perception that the ceremony was cancelled because it was not recognised in the Ultra Orthodox community. Justice for the Reform Jews was therefore perceived as a pretext to introduce a *charedi* worldview:

I also think that it is because [the CEO] is very religious, and according to the *Hallacha*, girls should not be seen singing. At Yeshivah [College] the *Bat-Mitzvah* is not even done and he does not see the importance or value of the ceremony ... The Reform [gave him] the reason and the opportunity.¹⁹⁰

One respondent clearly supported this decision. She maintained that if the Reform girls would participate in this ceremony, they "might get the wrong impression that they are Jewish". This indicated that there were some Orthodox-affiliated stakeholders who clearly supported the notion that Reform Jews are not Jews:

I know why he changed the *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremonies and I agree with him ... He actually showed a letter to the PTA, a letter that had come from the Federation of Synagogues ... [they] quoted an incident whereby a girl whose mother had converted Reform and who had then come to King David, lived as a Jew, had a *Bat-Mitzvah*, got a certificate, had grown up, fallen in love and gone to a rabbi and said 'We want to get married' and the rabbi said, 'I can't marry you, your mother converted Reform, in the eyes of the Jewish religion you are not a Jew'. 'What do you mean', she says, 'Here is the certificate from King David proving I am a Jew. I had a *Bat-Mitzvah*'. And the rabbi said, 'Your certificate was thrown in our faces, you must stop giving certificates to these people, they believe they are Jewish'.¹⁹¹

The parents were unhappy with the decision to stop the *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremony. A petition was sent to the Board to complain about ending the tradition:

¹⁸⁸ Parent, 8 November 2002. [Document 32:13 (497:526). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah and Reform].

¹⁸⁹ Honorary officer, 16 July 2002. [Document 26:43 (880:930). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah - stakeholders view of Bat-Mitzvah].

¹⁹⁰ Manager, 14 May 2002. [Document 3:231 (194:206). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah - reason for changing - strict Orthodoxy].

¹⁹¹ Manager, 1 July 2002. [Document 36:35 (1460:1528). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah - Teachers' views].

The reason we send our children to King David School is to have the "Jewish experience" that generations of women like me have had since the sixties and seventies.¹⁹²

Moreover, the parents would now carry the costs of the ceremony, which had in the past been carried by the schools. This was another example whereby privatisation of community services shifted the costs from the schools to the parents:

It's not a major issue. You see for the parents it became an issue, because the school - they paid their R550 or whatever the admin fees were, then to have it at a *shul* - you are talking about R3000 - R4000 they've got to pay - it's not part of the school day - they've got to go to extra *Bat-Mitzvah* lessons and breakfast *minyan* and it becomes another *schlep* for the parents.¹⁹³

An attempt was made to solve the conflict and to have the ceremony held in the school hall:

We are in the process of solving it. We have negotiated with [the vice-chairperson] and negotiated with [the head of Jewish Studies] to do a "Coming of Age" ceremony in the primary school hall ... it won't be called a *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremony, but all parents really want is their children, the girls in Grade 7, to stand up together, to wear pretty dresses and to do some choral verse.¹⁹⁴

Yet the stakeholder quoted below did not think that parents should have any voice in this matter and that they should rather concentrate on raising funds for the schools. This was a reference to the ongoing debate on the position and power of the parents in the community schools, a topic that will be discussed in Chapter 6. She also expressed the *charedi* perspective that the *Bat-Mitzvah* is not a religious ceremony and that girls should not be allowed on the *bima* (pulpit). Yet, she still did not support the manner in which it was implemented.

What is happening is the Grade 6s are all studying a syllabus in common. They will all write an exam and they will all attend a ceremony at a secular venue ... but not the girls standing in the *shul* by the *bima* thinking that they are now having a religious ceremony. That must end, I absolutely agree with it. But he [the CEO] just suddenly sends out a letter 'there will be no more *Bat-Mitzvahs*' and everybody's oh, oh, and they were hysterical and every change that comes about the parents - I mean, I attended some meetings where they said they are going to demand that he change this and change that and if he doesn't they are going to refuse to pay their school fees - and he very determinedly called in the PTA Executive and told them: 'You have no power, all you are is a fundraising body, stop thinking you have power'.¹⁹⁵

Teachers' reactions were diverse. Some were satisfied as it was a demanding ceremony to organise and the preparation was taking up too much teaching time. Others thought that a special bond between the girls would be lost. It is also feasible that with the greater workload for the teachers owing to the restructuring, they had even less time and energy to prepare for the function, which is more in the realm of the community rather than the school. In the following

¹⁹² Dear Parents, petition sent to parents from a parent of a Grade 6 child, 4 February 2002.

¹⁹³ Teacher, 24 October 2002. [Document 49:12 (462:535). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah - teachers' views].

¹⁹⁴ Parent, 14 August 2002. [Document 40:39 (756:765). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah - stakeholders' view of Bat-Mitzvah].

¹⁹⁵ Manager, 1 July 2002. [Document 36:35 (1460:1528). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah - teachers' views].

quotations one teacher's voice uses the managerial notion of "inefficient" use of time, while the other teacher's voice clings to the discourse of the community, of unity and special bonds:

I was very happy about it - because it's just a show. We lost three months in teaching time. It was always done during school ... Just hours and hours of practicing. It's something I could have done in four weeks. The Hebrew teacher or whoever did it, did it in four or five months. I mean it's such an inefficient use of time.¹⁹⁶

Okay, well these children have waited to get to their seventh grade year and have this beautiful, wonderful ceremony that makes them feel so special. It unifies the group.¹⁹⁷

The next respondent indirectly pointed to the fragmentation of the community, which would now permeate the school community as well:

But again, the children aren't having it together now. They are all having it in little pockets at this *shul* and that *shul*, which is nice for the *shuls*, but it doesn't keep the school as a cohesive group. And I think that as far as the Hebrew staff at the school are concerned, I think that has alleviated a lot of their workload.¹⁹⁸

One stakeholder was concerned that with the termination of the *Bat-Mitzvah* programme within the schools, a faction of the community, specifically the more secular members, would eventually abandon this tradition:

I've tried to go back and influence situations at the Board. I know there was an intention to give up the *Bat-Mitzvah* programme in the schools. In fact it was a *fait accompli* - and they told me that it hasn't been done ... But I said to them - I can't tell you whether it's a right programme or a wrong programme, except that I believe that it's a right programme, otherwise you are going to make it an optional programme - and people who see it as an option might just decide to abandon it.¹⁹⁹

By March 2002, to pacify the parents, the CEO sent another letter notifying them that there would be a new programme for Grade 6 boys and girls. The programme would take place during Jewish Studies periods and some afternoons. It was announced that the programme would be known as the King David "Girls of Valour" (*Bnot Chayil*) programme and the boys' programme would be called "Sons of the Torah" (*Bnei Torah*). Both labels have strict Orthodox connotations. It seems, however, that this was another school tradition that was claimed by the CEO as his own, and no real change took place:

So we are working on what [the CEO] calls a special programme, but in actual fact it is my Jewish Studies syllabus in Grade 6 ... and everything that I did he now says is his idea and that is the syllabus ... but anybody who knows what went on in the school before!! But I just decided to let it be. The *Bat-Mitzvah* programme is virtually the same in the learning, it's just that there won't be a ceremony, which I am very happy about. So that is one good thing.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁶ Manager, 21 April 200. [Document 4:82 (792:799). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah - teachers' views].

¹⁹⁷ Manager, 2 July 2002. [Document 6:36 (533:549). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah to graduation ceremony].

¹⁹⁸ Teacher, 8 January 2003. [Document 51:33 (963:981). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah - teachers' views].

¹⁹⁹ Community leader, 8 May 2002. [Document 10:67 (234:245). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah - view of the ceremony].

²⁰⁰ Manager, 26 May 2002. [Document 11:7 (132:142). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah programme].

The reason that the programme would be conducted in Grade 6 and not in the traditional Grade 7 was explained by the fact *'that the average age of pupils has shifted in recent years, and there is also less pressure on the Grade 6 pupils'*. It was announced that the boys' and the girls' programmes would each culminate with a special gala evening to be held during October 2002. Dates for the separate functions for the girls and boys were given.²⁰¹ The CEO also announced the intention to have two *Shabbatonim* (weekends) - one for the boys and one for the girls, and their parents and siblings - at a resort during October.²⁰² At the same time parents were encouraged to contact their synagogues in order to organise the more traditional *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremony that had now become the function of the rabbinical establishment *'where it should be'*²⁰³ and not the schools.

Three month later, after the idea of the middle school suddenly emerged, another letter was sent to parents:

With King David following the worldwide trend towards a middle school, Grade 6 will mark the end of the senior primary school phase. We have therefore decided to combine a graduation ceremony together with the *Bnot Chayil* and *Bnei Torah* programmes.²⁰⁴

This appeared to be the first time that parents and school staff became aware that there were plans for a middle school. It was announced that the gala function (now mixed for both girls and boys) would take place at the Sandton Convention Centre on 22 October and would include a seated dinner. Tickets were offered at R175 per person and each family was limited to five guests. It seemed that the CEO envisaged a huge banquet where he would be addressing a crowd of over 2000 parents and pupils.

Most parents did not respond and decided to boycott the affair. The CEO changed the venue to a smaller hall and reduced the price. Still, parents did not concede. Even the attempt to sell tickets by advertising that there were only a few tickets left did not impress the parents. It was then announced that the programme was open to all pupils in Grade 6 free of charge. Still, very few people agreed to attend the ceremony. Parents at Linksfield and Sandton continued to reject what they called the "extravaganza" envisaged by the CEO. They felt that it was an extremely expensive affair. The parents requested *'that a ceremony resembling the old accepted ceremony should be planned to take place in the school hall, and that no student of the school should be excluded for any reason'*.²⁰⁵ The CEO refused to allow parents to distribute the minutes of the PTA meeting at which, among others, the *Bat-Mitzvah* issue was discussed. But a group of parents handed out copies of the minutes to parents at the school gates and at the "big walk".

²⁰¹ Message from the CEO. *Davidian Star*, April 2002.

²⁰² New programme for Grade 6 boys and girls. SABJE. 15 March 2002.

²⁰³ Head of Hebrew address to parents, AGM KDVPPS, February 2003.

²⁰⁴ A letter from the CEO to all Grade 6 parents. Graduation ceremony – 22 October 2002, Sandton Convention Centre, 19 June 2002.

²⁰⁵ Minutes of meeting of the KD Junior and Primary schools, Linksfield PTA, 5 August 2002.

Victory Park parents were in agreement, but not that involved, as they were more concerned about saving their school from closure:

I expect there are more important things in life than fighting about that kind of issue. I'd rather King David Victory Park was still in existence in twenty years time, than fighting and using up our energy about Reform girls and *Bat-Mitzvah* classes.²⁰⁶

Subsequently, after gentle persuasion was not enough, the CEO made it obligatory for all children to attend the graduation ceremony. It appears that another supportive bank rescued the policy and decided to sponsor the affair for three years. The bank also opened a savings account for each child with an initial R108 as a gift. The gift would be given to the children at the graduation ceremony. Apple (1998) might argue that the children were used by the corporation to advance its own interests. However, my respondents by and large accepted this gesture as a good business investment on the bank's behalf with an educational value; that is, to teach children about money.

I think the school managed - or the Board managed - to get a donation from [bank]. It's very clever - it's good marketing, that [bank] would open them an account and put in R108 as a present. So now my child has an account at [bank]. So now, if you want to keep the account, you will go and put more money in. So you are banking with [bank]. ... I think it's clever. If the bank's prepared to do that, it didn't bother me, no.²⁰⁷

At the same time, the parents were promised that the synagogues adjacent to the schools would conduct the *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremony with the help of the teachers who used to organise the school ceremony. Parents were required to pay teachers directly. Teachers were satisfied as this meant they could earn extra money. Moreover, during this time, the weekend-long *bosberaad* that took place with a human resources facilitator (sponsored by another private bank), had resulted in the creation of good will by the school management towards the CEO, and the teachers therefore cooperated and encouraged pupils to attend the graduation ceremony.

One of the participants in the graduation ceremony, who was trying to make sense of the new tradition and of the CEO's new approach of appeasement towards the school community, said:

We still don't understand what this ceremony is all about: At the beginning we understood that it was a ceremony to replace the *Bat-Mitzvah*. It was supposed to be called Women of Valour and be only for the girls. After that the boys were added and it was called *B'not Chail* and *B'nei Torah*. It then changed its name to graduation because in the meantime the idea of the middle school came up and it was thought that it would be a good idea to end primary school with a ceremony. But the middle school did not happen, so it became *B'not Chail* and *B'nei Torah* again. A rabbi from Cape Town that gave the speech referred to it as *Bar-* and *Bat-Mitzvah*. Children's projects were everywhere. The tables were laid for a meal. Many children were there, teachers, principals, heads of departments, the coordinator for Jewish Studies and the public relations officer. From KDS out of 54 children, seven parents arrived. There are parents that are still angry that the *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremony was cancelled, and that their children were forced to go to the graduation ceremony ... Everyone [school staff] got expensive presents. The children received certificates and presents ... A thank you card written by [the CEO] to each of

²⁰⁶ Parent, 21 October 2002. [Document 43:57 (1296:1396). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah - stakeholders' view of Bat-Mitzvah].

²⁰⁷ Teacher, 9 January 2003. [Document 53:31 (742:757). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah - bank support].

the teachers ... Some children thought it was boring, some children thought it was nice. It could have been nicer - not emphasising food but education. It was too religious for us - there was a separation between men and women - which is not really a King David way.²⁰⁸

The children were also confused. They were not sure what they were graduating from, or why 11- and 12-year-old boys were celebrating their *Bar-Mitzvah* programme that should take place when they turn 13:

And the graduation ceremony this year in Grade 6, to me, was a fiasco. It wasn't thought out well enough, and wasn't implemented well enough, and what are they graduating from? I think [the CEO] thought he was going to have a middle school when he introduced the word "graduation". But because there isn't a middle school, what did they graduate from? From nothing ... *Bar-Mitzvah* year is only this year. Our children didn't do that much extra. They'd learnt their Jewish Studies - so they did some *Bikur Cholim* (visiting the sick) to the hospitals and, and then he had a whole dinner. So I don't know. The children weren't quite sure what it was all about, because they wanted to know what they were graduating from ...²⁰⁹

At the beginning of January 2003 a letter was sent to the parents from the public relations officer of the Board to inform them of the date for that year's graduation ceremony, whose function was '*to acknowledge all Grade 6s on the completion of the Bnei Torah and Bnot Chayil programmes and for their outstanding efforts through their community service*'. The cost was down to R150 per visitor, while children would be sponsored by the bank. Each school had by then obtained a video camera to record events that would take place during the year to use as footage on a promotional video to be aired at the graduation ceremony. This "glossification" of the schools' activities meant that much focus would be directed towards recording and performing, rather than learning or doing community service.

The parents were told that in the previous year '*many parents had requested to attend at the last minute and unfortunately could not be accommodated. They regretfully lost out on the opportunity of sharing this exciting event, seeing their child graduate from the Jewish Studies programme*'.²¹⁰ This time most parents booked their seats in advance and a new tradition had taken root. At the same time teachers continued to prepare the girls for their *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremonies at the different synagogues. Parents paid extra for the service. Rehearsals were occasionally held during school hours. The Reform girls were excluded.

The ending of the *Bat-Mitzvah* programme is an example of a primarily ideological change that was imposed on the school community, transforming one of its central

²⁰⁸ Journal entry, 26 October 2002. [Document 55:793 (2307:2364). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah to graduation ceremony].

²⁰⁹ Teacher, 9 January 2003. [Document 53:30 (697:741). Codes: Bat-Mitzvah to graduation ceremony].

²¹⁰ Letter to all parents of Grade 6 learners, 16 January 2003.

traditions. The pretext was correcting the past injustice done to the Reform girls, but in reality it served to satisfy the views of the more Orthodox segment of the community. Another change in this category was the cessation of the *Ulpan* programme to Israel. The pretext for the termination of that programme was its elitist character, and thus it was also justified as an act of social justice and equality that would correct the wrongs of the past. In reality it served to discard one of the hallmarks of the Zionist/secular/national ingredient of the schools (see Chapter 3).

In both changes, the ideological rationale interacted with the economic imperative of the restructuring. With the managerial demands for more efficiency and a reduction in the costs of teaching and teachers, the time that was dedicated to organising community functions – such as the *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremony – was considered as an inefficient usage of human capital. The same applied to the *Ulpan* programme, as clearly articulated by the CEO. In this case the notion of community was advanced to justify standardisation of services:

The *Ulpan* doesn't cost us money. When I say it doesn't cost us money, it depends on how you look at it. It doesn't cost. It can cost, because we are putting a lot of effort into the labour. None of these costs are ever allocated. But what I am trying to say is that our questions go to the very core of our ethos. Are we a school for the community or are we a school for the rich?²¹¹

This implies that services that cannot be audited should be eliminated, especially if they happen not to coincide with the *charedi* worldview. This supports the claim put forward in Chapter 2, that a drive for efficiency encourages schools to concentrate on the measurable and devalues the other functions of the school, such as its social function in the community and creating bonds among pupils and teachers.

The introduction of a new uniform was another ideological change that was initiated by parents who wanted to modernise certain items in the uniforms. Parents' need for renewal – which was endlessly debated with the previous regime and never reached a conclusion – was another pretext to change completely the colours and the shape of the uniform and to introduce more conservative-looking outfits. At the same time there were economic benefits, as the Board took over control of both the manufacturing and selling of the new uniform. This was another example whereby

²¹¹ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:32 (646:670). Codes: Israel - *Ulpan* programme]

economic and religious imperatives joined together to eradicate the symbols of the institution, thereby preparing the ground for the construction of a new identity.

I do not claim to know the real motives behind the CEO's actions or anybody else's actions. Nevertheless, while personal financial profit cannot be excluded in understanding the motive for the changes, the manner in which the CEO attacked the social and educational fabric of the schools points to the interplay of the envisaged monetary profit with the *charedi* antagonism towards the secular/Zionist/national ethos of the schools. The CEO presented himself as both a prophet calling for "re-Jew-vination"²¹² of the school community while at the same time he would incur financial profits – for the schools and for himself.

This chapter followed the interplay between fundamentalism and managerialism. Both claimed to be the forces that would correct past inequalities and establish an orderly society based on either religious fundamentalism or on the fundamentals of the market. The business concept of a henchman – who cleans out the rot and reorganises the institution – coincided with the fundamentalist view of eradicating the past life and reconstructing a new identity. The motif of a "new tree" and the notion of a "scorched earth policy", are common both to corporate restructuring and to the establishment of a new religion. The solution for both a failing business and for those Jews "who became slack in observance" was a complete change without continuity; the past was rotten, the future would bring the truth. Clarke and Newman (1997) who trace the intersection of the ideology of the New Right with managerialism, observe:

Like all good discourse, the new managerialism announced the conditions of its own necessity – elaborating a tale of failings of the old management and their dire consequences. ... The born-again manager could rescue the situation brought about by the failure of the old corporate mentality ...

The most important question that was at the back of my mind throughout the fieldwork was why – in the face of badly managed change, resistance from parents and school staff and much pain and unhappiness (not from those who lost their jobs but rather from those who stayed on) – the restructuring received the support of many stakeholders, especially the lay leaders of the schools and the community leaders; and how could this ruthless and incoherent change process be exerted and sustained? One manager voice quoted below demonstrated a preoccupation with the same issue:

²¹² See Prologue.

My understanding of [the restructuring] is that the Board was in this huge debt, and had to come out of the debt ... and there were players behind the scenes – and donors were refusing to give money until everything was taken into ... some sort of situation where it was looked after – and this person's name was put forward. Everyone bought into it – and whether they like it or not, now, whether they are being bullied now or not – they are seen to be just running behind that. I'm not sure why they are all so scared to change their minds even if they disagree with what's going on at the moment. ... The people on the Board of Education are wealthy individuals – these are people who have their own businesses – they don't owe anything to anybody – they are doing it on their own free time – yet, they are all scared.²¹³

This topic is discussed in Chapter 7 where it is suggested that the restructuring was accomplished not only by enforced change but also by winning the consent of many stakeholders. Moreover, it would be suggested that the historical characteristics of the community as well as a complex alliance of forces supported the process for different reasons.

Prior to that, in Chapter 6, I will follow the two main discourses of the restructuring – the economic and the ideological – and will explore further how they interacted in the complex terrain of the Jewish day schools wherein numerous tensions have pulled and twisted policies into different directions and knots. These conflicts will be viewed through the lens of new managerialism and its advocacy of efficiency, decentralisation, goal setting and different relationships between stakeholders.

²¹³ Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:43 (756:770). Codes: Reason - financial].