

Chapter 6

From King David to McDavid

The narrative so far reveals that the restructuring of the Jewish community schools evolved through the interplay between market and ideological forces. The market drive aimed at replacing the bureau-professional structure with a managerial regime that emphasised cost cutting and efficiency. The ideological drive aimed at intensifying the religious base of the schools and shifting them further towards the “right”. My thesis is that the discourse of new managerialism was used in order to gather support for the restructuring, while masking a ruthless top-down process of “economism” which aimed at generating both financial and religious benefits – that is, “profits and prophecy”.

The aim of this chapter is to interrogate the rhetoric of the managerial restructuring, to reveal the inherent contradictions within the discourse of new managerialism, and to demonstrate the synergy that it created with religious extremism.

Towards this end, I review the changes imposed by the restructuring through the lens of new managerialism. I specifically explore how the notions of efficiency, decentralisation, goal setting and accountability were interpreted, implemented and experienced at the Jewish community schools. I demonstrate the synergy as well as the contradiction between the managerial, religious and community values.

The evidence reveals a wide gap between the intended goals and their implementation, with intended and unintended consequences. I show that the managerial restructuring intended to produce what I term McDavid; that is, the *kosher* equivalent of the McDonald’s school described in Chapter 2. The McDavid School is envisaged to offer to customers (parents) an explicit, predictable, standard product, delivered by a disciplined and efficient workforce that would work “more for less” and is controlled by systems of accountability, such as appraisal and performance-related pay. The chapter identifies those policies that were implemented to varied degrees, and those policies that were rejected by the culture of the schools and the agency of the stakeholders. The attempt to impose a new mind-set quickly caused division, suspicion and lack of trust. As a result the managerial restructuring affected negatively the community values of the schools and produced demoralisation,

demotivation and fragmentation. At the same time it distracted the school community from focusing on the quality of their educational provisions.

I end this chapter with a second vignette that follows the trajectory of one policy that had the pretext of educational improvement and the intention of changing the school structure to comply with global and national trends. And yet this was the policy that brought down the CEO and caused his eventual dismissal, as mentioned in the Prologue.

The drive for efficiency

One of the initial steps in the restructuring process (April 2001) was to change the accounting system to comply with Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (GAAP), which included leave pay and depreciation. It was calculated that an amount of R7–8 million was owed to the school staff for accumulated long leave. After including all these extra liabilities the debt at the end of 2001 was R37,400,323.¹ Stakeholders spoke about a round figure of R40 million.

Two years later, at the 27th Conference of the South African Board of Jewish Education, the Board showed an *'audited surplus (after expenditures and including donations) in the 2002 financial year of nearly R12 million The debts (that is liabilities) decreased from the end of 2000 level of nearly R38 million to under R18 million at the end of 2002'*.²

Stakeholders perceived this to be a miraculous turnaround that had saved Jewish education and had *'changed the school [from one] that was losing millions and millions into a school that is ... making millions, and that at least has meant that the school can continue forward'*.³

It is not clear how much was saved due to donations, due to the introduction of GAAP, or due to the introduction of sustainable systems that were successfully used in the private for-profit colleges. As the previous chapter clearly demonstrated, the process was not transparent and information was not always available to stakeholders. The objective of this section, therefore, is to point to some apparent means that were used to achieve efficiency and how those were understood and experienced by the

¹ South African Board of Jewish Education, Annual financial statement for the year ended 31 December 2001. Auditors - Grant Thornton Kessel Feinstein.

² Notice to all principals, teachers, staff and parents, 10 April 2003.

³ Community leader, 18 July 2002. [Document 23:24 (428:437). Codes: CEO - financial success].

stakeholders. It is not my aim to present a financial report, however, quantitative data will be included where available.

The budget cuts were aimed at reducing the cost of central administration, the cost of teachers, the cost of teaching and the cost of community services, such as remedial education, social and psychological services as well as outreach programmes. Many implementation problems emerged. It is therefore argued in this chapter that the managerial reform was a short-term solution that gave the community temporary financial relief, yet was unable to provide a sustainable solution to the inherent complexities in the management of a Jewish community school. At the same time it impacted negatively on the ethos of the schools and on the loyalty and motivation of the stakeholders. I will also demonstrate that the budget cuts were not neutral and were often used for political or ideological gains.

The analysis of the data reveals a distinctive difference between stakeholders outside the schools and those inside the schools in their understanding of the financial recovery. While the former glorified the financial gain irrespective of how it was achieved, the latter lamented the decline in professional values, educational standards, community services and human worth.

Reducing the cost of head office

The dismissal of the professional officers of the Board was meant to reduce the cost of managing the organisation. The figures in Table 1 indeed show a significant saving on salaries at Board level, despite the fact that the figure for the first six months of 2002 may still include some retrenchment packages. However, since the CEO's remuneration package was not revealed this could not be a conclusive statement. It is also probable that some of the savings on the overhead expenses were achieved by reducing the cost of professional development (see following section) and by shifting expenses to the schools. For example, it appears that the schools paid R2,853,373 in administration expenses to the Board for the first six months at 2002.⁴ There is, however, very little data and it is mostly sketchy.

⁴ Expenditure for the period Jan–Jun 2000 (H/O, Casper and transport expenses allocated to schools).

Table 1 – Board Expenditure⁵

	2000	2001 (Including retrenchment packages)	2002 (Jan–Jun)
Salaries	5,342,690	6,793,511	2,091,440
Overhead expenses	3,794,191	2,052,943	761,933

As the restructuring evolved, the Board’s building filled up with different functionaries, mostly in administrative roles. The following respondent applauded the tactic of replacing long-term employees with new, cheaper ones without considering the immorality of this act (Bottery, 2000):

[The CEO] was very, very clever. There were people at the Board ... who were earning very big money because they had been there for a very long time. He managed to get them off, he got rid of those who were costing a lot of money and not really doing a terribly good job. Yes, at the end of the day, for example in the finance section, he got rid of too many people; you can’t run that finance section with so few people. What he has brought in is new people whom he is paying very low salaries because they have still got to build themselves up.⁶

Stakeholders also noted that most of the new employees were gentiles. It is unclear whether the main motivation for this was to increase racial equity, to have administrators who are not emotionally involved with the community, or to have an efficient and disciplined workforce that would keep the Board of Jewish Education open for business most days of the year, including Jewish holidays. Moreover, the new positions were not advertised but were handed out to people who were brought in by the CEO. It therefore seems that the restructuring at Board level had a strong political objective in order:

... to get rid of anybody who had power to make any decisions. If you look at the building where the Board is, there were five or six people who could make decisions in different areas. Now there’s one person and secretarial staff. And that’s it. There are a couple of other people, but they are just there to do the bidding of what [the CEO] wants, and that’s a very big change.⁷

The unavailability of data made it difficult to assess the financial gains following the dismissal of the professional officers. The political gain was, however, clearly identified. Through this process the Board lost much of its “memory”, continuity and accumulated experience. The identity of the new organisation would therefore be based on forgetting rather than on remembering:

⁵ SABJE, Income and expenditure report, January–June 2002.

⁶ Manager, 1 July 2002. [Document 36:13 (738:749). Codes: Cost cutting - less expensive staff].

⁷ Manager, 15 October 2002. [Document 39:10 (517:541). Codes: Previous Board - dismissal].

He is also a person who wants his own people, his yes-men, so he cleared the Jewish Board of all the people who had the experience and knowledge. He did not build on what they knew but brought in new people. And the worst is that they were speaking about the need to cut and cut, but somehow the offices in the Board have filled up. Today there are many new people.⁸

Reducing the cost of teachers

The cost of teaching was reduced by cutting the number of teachers, their remunerations and perks. The following sections will elaborate on these measures and will explore the stakeholders' reaction at the imposed financial cuts.

Retrenchment

It was evident that *'the only way you can save money in an organisation where 80% of your expenses is on salaries is to cut down on the number of bodies around, which is a very painful exercise'*.⁹ Exact numbers were not available but it seemed that each school lost 10–30% of their teaching staff. The figures in Table 2 show the reduction in the salaries bill. Caution is needed when reading these figures as the 2002 figures might include retrenchment packages and at the same time they do not include the July increases. However, even keeping the salary bill from escalating in two years is a considerable achievement in an inflationary economy.

Table 2 – School Expenditure¹⁰

	2000	2001 (Including retrenchment packages)	2002 (Jan–Jun)
Salaries	46,225,304	47,509,887	22,454,983
Overhead expenses	8,673,881	11,951,572	6,359,281

The overwhelming perception was that the retrenchments were necessary and that the schools were over-staffed. It is also inevitable that in a harsh restructuring process *'you never ever get rid of the people you want to get rid of. You always get rid of the people you shouldn't get rid of'*.¹¹ The main concerns were therefore whether the right people were retrenched and whether the process was as humane as possible. The evidence shows that the answer to both these concerns was negative:

⁸ Manager, 14 May 2002. [Document 3:23 (239:246). Codes: CEO - works with yes-men].

⁹ Lay leader, 13 August 2002. [Document 45:5 (180:185). Codes: Teachers - salaries].

¹⁰ SABJE, Income and expenditure report, January–June 2002.

¹¹ Lay leader, 28 October 2002. [Document 30:44 (718:727). Codes: Process - retrenchment process].

There were some that went voluntarily because there was so much uncertainty around what was going to happen ... A lot of people went and looked for jobs out there, to go and see if there was anything else for them – and a couple secured jobs – okay. Some of them I didn't want to lose, but there were others that I was quite happy to see the last of ...¹²

The initial plan was to select people on the basis of their skills. Teachers were therefore requested to reapply for their jobs, and a committee was supposed to select the most qualified teachers.¹³ The process had to be handled by the principals without any directive or support from the Board. At one school, teachers sought union advice and refused to reapply for their jobs. Another school went along with the procedure. The degree of compliance depended on the approach of the principal and on the presence of teachers among the staff who were not afraid to voice their opinions or to act upon them. At one school, the obedient principal followed the process while telling selected teachers in private that their jobs were secure. At another school the principal joined the union together with the teachers, but had to withdraw the membership since the CEO refused to communicate with anyone who was a union member. By the end of the process it was perceived that “some good teachers were lost” to the system.

As secular and Hebrew teachers were retrenched, more Jewish Studies teachers, religious youth leaders and campus rabbis were employed.¹⁴ Though rabbis were always involved at the schools, it was perceived that the intention was that they would have more authority in Jewish matters than the principals to ensure that the schools adhere more strictly to *hallacha*.¹⁵

Long leave cancelled

Long leave was cancelled with immediate effect and steps were taken to get rid of the debt related to accumulated long leave, which was estimated at R7–8 million. A new timetable was introduced (July–December 2001) with a possible load of 40–48 hours for each teacher (instead of the usual 30–38 hours). This necessitated subject teaching by the teachers who remained “active”. Teachers who became “inactive” had to use

¹² Manager, 2 July 2002. [Document 6:30 (455:469). Codes: Process - retrenchment process].

¹³ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:106 (3933:3955). Codes: Process - retrenchment process].

¹⁴ I unfortunately have no statistics and this information is based only on the interviews.

¹⁵ *Hallacha* – the entire corpus of Jewish Law.

up their accumulated leave or do locum work for other teachers who were ill or on leave. In a matter of a few months part of the debt had been eliminated.

Thus until the end of 2001 *'there were people coming and going and a lot of backbiting'*.¹⁶ Schoolwork was disrupted, the pupils were unsettled and parents realised that the restructuring would affect their own children:

When he did the retrenchments, my one son had four Hebrew teachers ... My other son, when his teacher went away, one of the little girls [in his class] phoned her and said: 'Please Mrs ... Can you come back?'... So she came back a week early. She couldn't take it any more.¹⁷

Teachers had a difficult time adjusting to the increased workload, especially when they were assigned to grades and subjects that they had never taught before and were given no time to prepare or adjust. My data reveals the use of different coping mechanisms as teachers adapted to the intensification of their work:

We are now doing borders and colouring in. There is not the same pressure to achieve and enrich. The teachers are pacing their work slower so they can cope with the demands. Instead of resting during free periods they are taking it easy during class. Most of the teachers seem to comply with the demands and are afraid of losing their jobs. Everyone's trying to keep themselves as clean as possible and not get involved. As long as they can get through their day and have it as easy as possible and as trouble-free as possible.¹⁸

Other coping mechanisms included: *'teaching the lesson and pushing stencils'* at the children; giving less homework that would require marking; marking during lessons instead of after hours (as was done previously); and avoiding any community or enrichment activities.

The tense atmosphere created by the "long leave" phase was over when the year ended, however, the loss of trust and suspicion remained, as I will demonstrate later. Interestingly, part of the "miraculous" financial recovery happened when the long leave was added to the debt and was then saved by teachers' increased workloads. This left stakeholders wondering what percentage of this financial gain was paid to the CEO.

Increased workload

¹⁶ Manager, 17 July 2002. [Document 35:11 (296:358). Codes: Process - teachers to take long leave].

¹⁷ Parent, 14 August 2002. [Document 40:63 (1197:1207). Codes: Process - teachers to take long leave].

¹⁸ Journal entry, 25 September 2001. [Document 55:73 (9224:9231). Codes: Teachers - adapting to change].

On the whole, teachers' workloads were increased. Locums were no longer available, and teachers were instructed to take over the classes of their absent colleagues. Middle management was given the same workload as ordinary teachers. There was a requirement that primary teachers would teach 40 hours a week while high school teachers would teach 35 hours. This was not always adhered to and managers found some creative ways to make the timetable look heavier than it really was.

Teachers usually do not like to admit that they are not giving their best to their pupils. In a typical answer to the question, '*Has the restructuring impacted on the quality of your work?*', the teachers would point out other teachers who had been affected, while maintaining that the quality of their work had remained almost the same in spite of the increased workload:

You know what – on some people, yes. On me, I'm giving exactly what I've always given but I'm a lot more tired. You know what – from 31'ish to 40 at [Grade 7] level, your marking, your preparation, your energy – that it has impacted on ... I'm not lazy. I'm not scared of hard work. But your time just to see a kid – to get yourself focused – you don't have that kind of time at school any more.¹⁹

One is much more pressurised ... So in a sense to me, your teaching – one has to teach obviously at an excellent standard – but in a sense because of all the pressures, you find the teachers are actually getting sick. And teachers are pressurised, and you find that maybe they have less patience with the pupils than they had before – because your expectations are still the same.²⁰

Stakeholders outside the schools perceived it differently. One honorary officer maintained that working a little harder would not harm the teachers and the fact that there were no resignations was a sign that the workload was manageable:

I think also the fact that [the CEO] is asking teachers to work a little harder, can't harm anybody. They do have, or they did have, a pretty good life. You know what – as a result of all that, there haven't been any resignations – the fact that they are working harder. There have not been any resignations. So that didn't worry me particularly.²¹

Some teachers did in fact resign, but in the main teachers stayed at the schools despite constant mutterings about leaving. (I will come back to this topic later in the chapter.) Certain teachers did admit that they had had a rather easy life before and that the intensification of the workload was not unjustified. At the end of the first year of the restructuring there was a feeling among teachers that they had managed to '*pick up*

¹⁹ Teacher, 24 October 2002. [Document 49:18 (665:693). Codes: Teachers - workload].

²⁰ Teacher, 26 August 2002. [Document 31:18 (369:416). Codes: Teachers - workload].

²¹ Honorary officer, 29 July 2002. [Document 47:6 (371:377). Codes: Teachers - workload].

the extra load and make it work'. But what seems to have begun eroding at that stage was their level of commitment. The common phrase was: "It became a job".

Teachers' salaries

More efficiency gains were achieved by reducing the salary bill. In the first year (2001) of the restructuring the teachers had to forfeit the annual government increase of nine percent. A "cost to company" salary scale was introduced whereby perks became part of the salary. All these changes were accepted with mixed feelings and without much open resistance.

It was announced that the system was top heavy and that there were too many vice-principals and deputies earning high salaries. With the declining enrolment figures this expense was perceived to be unsustainable. It seems that the CEO tried to eliminate a tradition that had been entrenched in the schools for many years (as described in Chapter 3) by applying a simple formula:

The number of vice-principals will be according to a formula. I want to take away the whole arbitrary nature of a lot of this within the school structure here ... I want to basically say, here is the structure for the schools If a school loses 50 kids ... it may well give rise to the fact that there are too many vice-principals at the school, because again, my formula is a simple one – that you take the number of kids in the school and divide by 200, and that gives you the number of headmaster and vice-principal posts.²²

There was, however, a wide gap between intentions and implementation. In order to alleviate the problem of highly paid executives the CEO decided to introduce salary parity and an equitable system that did not discriminate and differentiate between employees. The new salary scale was implemented in July 2002, when the government increased teachers' salaries by another nine percent. As a result some teachers who were previously overlooked, new, less qualified or those compensated by other means, such as accommodation, were delighted with their increased salaries; while the high salary earners were expected to forfeit a second nine percent general teachers' increase. The CEO presented this action as a way of correcting the inequalities of the past. The quotation below shows that those who resisted it were presented as immoral people who "abused children". This is an example of the democratic rhetoric of new managerialism and its pretence as a just system:

²² Recorded consultation with CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:70 (2091:2154). Codes: CEO vs. school executives].

I was told that the KD teachers are underpaid. There is a band of teachers who were horrifically underpaid. There is a band of teachers who were right on spot and there is a band of teachers who are overpaid. I went to the teachers and told them that and I realised that there are some teachers who have been using their muscles for a long time to get much more money. Consequently – I am loved by some, neutral to others and hated by some... I brought new scales that took away all discrimination. Some people got 35% – they are very happy. I don't know why, they should have realised that they were cheated before for a long time. And the people that did not receive an increase – they did what is typical – they run to the class and abuse the children. Like the one teacher who said – I will not teach. The children then run to the parents who run to the Board.²³

By that stage the restructuring had lost much of its credibility among stakeholders. There was much upheaval about the establishment of a middle school, the closure of the Victory Park campus, the cancellation of the *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremony and the introduction of new school uniforms. Teachers and parents were up in arms about the lack of transparency and the autocratic manner in which decisions were made. While many teachers were scared and subdued, the executives at Linksfield High School openly opposed the CEO and were communicating these feelings to the parents and pupils. There was a perception that the discourteous behaviour of the CEO towards teachers was created by design to create ill-feeling amongst the executives who would look for better positions, and in the end would not be replaced, or would be replaced with cheaper teachers.²⁴ However, this did not happen. When the executives threatened resignation, parents supported them and the CEO had to retract the policy of salary parity.

This raises the question of whether salary parity is at all beneficial to a system. One respondent argued that in the competitive private education market in South Africa one has to maintain quality and acknowledge those who are valuable to the system.²⁵ A lay leader was confused: while he seemed to support the notion of parity and equity he also realised that this might affect the achievements of the schools. This is also an example whereby stakeholders agreed with the CEO while their experience told them otherwise – a topic that I will return to in Chapter 7 when I analyse the impact of the CEO's charisma on the restructuring process:

The problem with any system is that you have people who earn too much ... and you have people who earn too little. ... The vast majority are sort of on the right scale, and I think one's responsibility is to try and bring the excesses in line on both sides of

²³ CEO's presentation: Is Transformation in King David Possible – Is the Future Secure? 11 August 2002, Second Innings, Emmerentia.

²⁴ Parent, 14 August 2002. [Document 40:32 (593:601). Codes: Teachers - salaries].

²⁵ Manager, 8 October 2002. [Document 34:11 (386:456). Codes: Teachers - salaries].

the scale. But having said that, at the end of the day, the King David system is – in my words – a centre of excellence – and I don't think anyone wants to tangle with that.²⁶

Another lay leader quoted below seemed to buy into the idea of equity and parity, but was surprised when he encountered the “implementation dip”:

I heard one of the complaints was that ... the useless teachers got huge increases. So ... here you look at a situation and say – certain teachers are being underpaid. Surely as a respectable organisation, you have to look to those situations as well – to then be told that, well, you know – you are overpaying the useless teachers. You can't win!²⁷

In sum, the policy that aimed at introducing parity and an equitable salary scale was not implemented as envisaged. There were still reports of ongoing attempts to keep certain teachers from resigning by offering them better packages.²⁸ There was still no transparency and none of my respondents at school level were shown how the scale worked. The general feeling was that *'certain people will always negotiate separate deals for themselves, although [the CEO] said there won't be any of that, that there's perfect equity'*.²⁹

This clumsy attempt to equalise salaries and to make the system less “top heavy” had negative effects on the system. It seemed that the CEO had opened a “Pandora's box”.³⁰ Employees began to compare their salaries and wanted to know why some received so much and others not. The whole episode left teachers with a bitter taste and with a feeling of alienation from the organisation:

So what's happened is that the Board to a certain extent today, has lost that human touch ... people, in my opinion, are not seen as teachers with needs who have to have certain things and if you were given a little bit extra in your salary, fine. Today you are a cost to company or a cost to the Board, and your relative importance is your cost to the Board rather than you as a teacher and an academic who the Board is going to look after as best as possible, because they want to keep you within the system.³¹

More cost savings were achieved by reducing the fee assistance programme for teachers, by cancelling extra payments for working overtime or running clinics during school holidays, by employing new teachers on a yearly contract without any perks, etc. One can conclude that following the restructuring teachers were required to work

²⁶ Manco member, 5 August 2002. [Document 16:19 (344:357). Codes: Teachers - salaries].

²⁷ Lay leader, 13 August 2002. [Document 45:28 (610:683). Codes: Teachers - salaries].

²⁸ Teacher, 8 January 2003. [Document 51:3 (267:292). Codes: Teachers - leaving the system; Teachers - salaries].

²⁹ Teacher, 30 July 2002. [Document 48:3 (77:86). Codes: Teachers - parity].

³⁰ Manager, 14 May 2002. [Document 3:27 (259:272). Codes: Restructuring - creating distrust between stakeholders].

³¹ Teacher, 26 August 2002. [Document 31:13 (261:275). Codes: Teachers - dehumanised].

“more for less” and no attempt was made to ensure that the quality of education would be retained, and that teaching would not be disrupted. The evidence reveals that these policies negatively affected the morale and commitment of the teachers as well as their loyalty towards the organisation. This created further divisions and suspicion among staff. Moreover, as Chapter 5 clearly demonstrated, none of these policies were implemented in a coherent manner so as to reduce stress. Teachers waited until the last day of term to find out whether or not they would get increases. Rumours were spreading. The principals were not involved in any decisions, yet they had to implement them. It was all in the hands of the CEO and his financial/secretarial team who tried to fit people into matrixes, formulas and salary bands. This rationality was resisted. It seemed that the Jewish community schools still remained, in a term borrowed from Reimer and McGinn (1977), an irrational organisation.

Reducing the costs of teaching

Certain budget cuts targeted the educational provisions of the schools. Subject teaching replaced the less efficient class teaching in certain grades, while this was resisted in the lower grades. There was a reduced subject choice, which affected the high schools more than the primary schools, but some decisions were reversed when parents and teachers objected. Speech and Drama as a matric subject was taken out of the curriculum for one year only to be re-instituted the following year. Research maintains that a curriculum is never a neutral entity but rather determined by the ideology of those in power (Apple, 1979). It is therefore my claim that the cost cutting in educational provisions was in synergy with the ideological facet of the restructuring. The diluting of the liberal arts was just another attempt to pull the schools towards the extreme “right” and towards the “closure of the pupils’ minds”. The following examples will further substantiate this claim.

Standardised curriculum

The evidence indicates that the rhetoric of achievement and individuality that had characterised the KD schools had been replaced with demands for standardisation and uniformity. In this way schools could be controlled and monitored:

So in many areas the schools need to have the same character when it comes to their ethos. When it comes to, for example, the carrying out of secular syllabi, I believe there has to be uniformity. In other words, that there shouldn't be a difference in standard between History at Linksfield and History at Victory Park, and even in the

coverage, it needs to be coordinated – that by the end of term, both schools would have done x – this would put pressure on some, but by the end of term two, the coverage would be the same, and the exams would reflect that coverage.³²

The teachers were not perceived as the experts, but rather as technicians who delivered a curriculum that was written elsewhere:

We should not be below standards but also not above standards. The books are very good, they were written by experts who had time to sit and write.³³

The demand for a standardised curriculum was a combination of cost cutting, control and ideology. As a cost cutting exercise, teachers were requested to develop notes in a book form or to use prescribed textbooks in order to save on the cost of paper. The costs would be shifted to the parents.

A standardised curriculum implies a changing notion of teacher professionalism. Instead of teachers as the producers of a curriculum, teachers were portrayed as the deliverers of a curriculum. Their labour would thereby be controlled by common central exams. This would also cut overheads and teachers' time. Thus, while the schools were struggling to adjust to South Africa's revised Curriculum 2005 and to show that they were moving towards outcomes-based education (OBE), the teachers had the conflicting demand of producing '*an old fashioned scheme of work*' with weekly, monthly and term preparation.³⁴ The pressure for uniformity was especially strong in the Jewish Studies subject where the CEO demanded that there be a highly prescriptive curriculum, where each lesson would be planned in advance to the end of the year.

With the lack of investment in secular studies, and with the decentralisation of control of the general curriculum to the schools, the CEO advocated a shift from the Independent Examination Board (IEB) – to which many independent schools in South Africa are affiliated – to the public schools system. The pretext was social justice and the good of the country:

Kader Asmal [Minister of Education] decided that there would be one national system. I am all for this. It is not so gloomy. I am not for the IEB – but for a national system. I believe that I have to consider the good of the country. ... I don't see any difference between the IEB and GBE [Gauteng Board of Education]. The minister wants to limit the choice of subjects – no foreign language or Jewish Studies in the

³² Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:23 (520:533). Codes: CEO - wants uniformity].

³³ Journal entry, [Document 55:686 (3982:3987). Codes: CEO - educational ideas].

³⁴ Manager, 2 July 2002. [Document 6:97 (1023:1038). Codes: CEO - educational ideas].

school. If Kader Asmal will have his way he will not allow religious learning in the schools – and here the Jewish schools are alone in the fight.³⁵

The quotation above demonstrates that a national curriculum posed opportunities for reduced costs as well as a threat to the Jewish identity of the schools. It seemed that the CEO was reluctant to join the Independent Schools' Association of Southern Africa (ISASA) in its negotiations to preserve an independent system.³⁶ As a matter of fact, there is evidence to suggest that he de-registered some of the schools from membership of the ISASA. By the envisaged shift from the independent to the public system, more costs would be cut.

The policies leading to a unified and standardised curriculum throughout the system, like many others, were not implemented, but in many cases teachers complied with some external demands, such as prescribing textbooks for their pupils. Subsequently, parents purchased books which were often only used symbolically to justify the expense, while teachers continued to work from their own worksheets. It seemed that the teachers only provided visible changes while continuing to work as they had always done.

Control over expenditure

By centralising purchases and dividing the schools into small cost centres, the CEO was able to institute strong control mechanisms over expenditure. Unfortunately, I do not have much information regarding these initiatives, especially from the perspective of the administrators. Teachers occasionally complained about the difficulty in getting hold of parents and how they needed to use their private cellphones in order to communicate with parents. They complained about the lengthy procedures they had to go through when needing telephone lines, paper, stationery, material for laboratory experiments, the bus service, etc. Library budgets were cut and school outings had to be paid by the schools' fundraising activities or had to be negotiated with the Board. In order to avoid having to bargain with the Board teachers and managers preferred to omit these outings, or chose outings that cost very little. At the same time, outings for the *Bat-Mitzvah* programme as well as the organisation of the ceremony were centralised at Board level and became the role of a newly employed public relations officer. This again shows the shifting of funds from educational to ideological needs.

³⁵ Journal entry. [Document 55:662 (3776:3785). Codes: Curriculum 2005 - future of Hebrew/JS].

³⁶ New educational policy a challenge. *The Sunday Times*, 16 September 2001.

Less qualified teachers

Evidence shows that while experienced teachers and teachers over 60 years old were encouraged to leave, they were replaced with less qualified or new teachers. Art, Drama and Music teachers were replaced by class teachers with no special qualifications in these subjects. Following strong criticism from parents, new specialist Art and Drama teachers were employed, but again these teachers were mostly newly qualified or unqualified in the relevant subjects. While the saving on the liberal arts could be viewed as a neutral budget cut, one should not underestimate the ideological rejection of these subjects by the stricter religious sectors. There was also an attempt to employ teachers more for their level of religious observance than for their qualifications:

[There is a new] untrained teacher who is an IJ, which I call an Instant Jew, *Ba'alei Teshuva*, with limited knowledge and is virtually training how to teach ... the CEO feels that she is *frum* (religious) and she is learning ...³⁷

Recruiting teachers for their level of observance rather than for their pedagogical skills was perceived to have pros and cons, especially in the field of Jewish Studies:

We either have rabbis who are not qualified teachers. They know nothing about pedagogy or, which is just as bad, we have qualified teachers – they know pedagogics but they know nothing about *Limudei Kodesh* (Sacred Studies), they've never opened the Bible before.³⁸

However, where teaching is aimed at increasing the level of observance, children need to learn by example:

You can teach somebody to teach but you mustn't stand up in front of children and say, 'Do it, but I don't!' You have got to be able to speak from what 'I' do because children can only trust you if you are doing it yourself.³⁹

Professional development curtailed

In the first two years of the restructuring the professional development of teachers was mostly neglected, with the exception of Jewish Studies. There was some professional development around the introduction of the OBE curriculum. Selected teachers took personal initiatives, but those were mostly self-financed. The only

³⁷ Manager, 26 May 2002. [Document 11:1 (77:86). Codes: Jewish studies - teachers' qualification].

³⁸ Community leader, 28 January 2003. [Document 60:11 (209:224). Codes: Jewish studies - teachers' qualification].

³⁹ Manager, 1 July 2002. [Document 36:21 (979:986). Codes: Jewish studies - teachers' qualification].

visible change was the introduction of Kumon math⁴⁰ in certain classes in the junior school at Linksfield; a move that was financed by parents and was received with mixed feelings by staff. The introduction of Kumon math confirmed the role of teachers as deliverers of the curriculum and resulted in a further shift of expenses to parents.

Though the information regarding finances is not comprehensive, the figures in Table 3 reveal a startling contrast in educational input between the previous and current management:

Table 3 – Investment in professional development, 1999–June 2002

	1999 ⁴¹	2000 ⁴²	2001 ⁴³	2002 ⁴⁴ (Jan–Jun)
KDL	126 368	112 730		5 555
KDVP	82 814	88 410	9 643	9 725
KDS	35 339	39 892		600
Yiddish Folk	381	19 122		1 425
Board – educational development	177 501	354 239		
Board – professional development	666 927	383 999		
Total	1 089 330 (1.5% of the total budget)	998 392 (1.5% of the total budget)		17 305 (0.04% of the total budget)

The Jewish Studies Department, with new two coordinators to begin with, was the only department that organised regular in-service training on behalf of the Board. Moreover, even though the CEO stated that teachers should be available for in-service training during school holidays and after hours, Jewish Studies programmes were the exception, and those were permitted to take place during school hours. Another religious programme was offered to all staff and was conducted after hours by an *Ohr Sameach* rabbi, with a “right of centre” ideology. The rabbi was well known for his success in bringing many Jews back to “authentic” Judaism. His mandate was to question the ethos of the schools and to be *‘critical of [the schools] if he wants to be.*

⁴⁰ A Japanese method of teaching mathematics that uses mostly housewives to operate the programme.

⁴¹ The 1999 figures were taken from the SABJE, Annual financial Statements, 31 December 2000.

⁴² The 2000 figures were taken from the SABJE, Annual financial Statements, 31 December 2000.

⁴³ The figure for 2001 was taken from a document titled: Income and Expenditure for the period Jan–Dec 2001, KDVP, Auditor final, 9 October 2002.

⁴⁴ The figures for the first six months of 2002 were taken from a document titled: King David Schools, Expenditure for the Period Jan–Jun 2002 (Head office, Casper and transport expenses allocated to schools), 20 August 2002.

He doesn't have to toe any specific party line or anything'.⁴⁵ Teachers who attended these courses were promised monetary reward.⁴⁶ An additional bonus was offered to the teacher who showed the most commitment to the Jewish Studies programme. So it seems that while finances were hardly available for individual or secular learning, there were funds for professional development in Jewish Studies and for enrichment programmes that aimed at destabilising the existing ethos of the schools and reconstructing a new one.

Streamlining the remedial services

The remedial departments were restructured and streamlined. The remedial therapists' hours were cut back and the costs of remedial lessons were charged to the parents. At one of the schools parents also paid extra for remedial Hebrew lessons. The number of small classes was reduced at the Linksfield campus, and cancelled at the other two campuses. A surcharge of 20% was charged to parents whose children were in those classes.⁴⁷ One remedial teacher maintained that at the beginning the knowledge that the children were paying extra money for the services gave her a greater sense of responsibility to satisfy their needs. A year later there was some disillusionment when she realised that the new system limited the support that the children received, as well as their progress.

Whether remedial services should be offered at the schools, to which grades, who should attend them and whether they were beneficial, was an on-going debate at the schools that had not been resolved. In the past, despite of attempts to coordinate the services, they were managed in an ad-hoc manner. Different policies were instituted at each school depending on the principal, the number of children who needed the support, the severity of the disabilities and the capacity at each school to attend to them.

The CEO's approach to remedial education reflected the interplay between the ideological, economical and educational facets of the restructuring. While research maintains that the causes for learning disabilities could be found in the individual, the system or a combination of the two (Reid and Hresko, 1981), the CEO blamed it

⁴⁵ Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document, 21:21 (439:490). Codes: Teachers - professional development].

⁴⁶ Letter to teachers from the coordinator of Jewish Studies, 19 June 2002.

⁴⁷ Letter to parents from the supervisor of remedial education, 16 November 2001.

mostly on the system.⁴⁸ His argument was that the academic level of the schools was too high; that by offering the services the schools were attracting children with difficulties; and that remedial problems were prevalent at all religious schools because of their tendency to accelerate the learning of a second language (Hebrew). As a solution the CEO suggested lowering the standards of the schools, standardising the curriculum, cutting the remedial services so that the schools would not get the image of being remedial schools, and replacing some Hebrew lessons with Jewish Studies lessons in grades 1 and 2, a policy that was implemented almost immediately after he took office. Moreover, capitalising on the increasing need to cater for children with learning disabilities (not only Jewish) especially at high school level, the CEO in his personal business capacity opened a new, privately owned remedial school in KDL's vicinity, mimicking the remedial facilities that were historically offered at the schools. He was thus seen to be benefiting from the cut in remedial services to the community.⁴⁹

With the reduction in the remedial services, class teachers were left to deal alone with pupils who had learning problems. This was perceived to have pros and cons:

Look, you always get heterogeneous levels, kids from lower to higher – but we have got kids who are actually in our classes now who are so needy they need individual attention, they need a different pace, they need different skills but they are in the mainstream and they are struggling. They are struggling and their self image goes and their parents come in frustrated and angry and the school cannot offer them what they should be getting, which is special education.⁵⁰

On the other hand:

Teachers have this idea that they cannot be responsible for children who have learning problems; it is too much for them, so they hand over to the remedial teacher to take that responsibility. And now, you see, they can't do that any more ... the child has to be their responsibility in the class, right ... So that is a major change and the teachers are very upset by it, plus the fact that they have fewer frees, you know, so they are very angry people, the teachers.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2002. [Document 20:61 (1857:1888). Codes: CEO - approach to remedial].

⁴⁹ Eden announces SCIP (Small Class Inclusion Programme) – a new school adjacent to the existing Eden College Lyndhurst to start in January 2003. Undated document.

⁵⁰ Teacher, 27 May 2002. [Document 14:43 (807:872). Codes: Remedial services].

⁵¹ Manager, 28 May 2002. [Document 5:28 (460:564). Codes: Remedial services].

Outsourced educational programmes

The financial cuts also impacted on programmes that were traditionally outsourced and aimed at the social development of the pupils. Programmes such as “Learning to say No”; an AIDS play for the high schools, Drug-Wise, PEDI (an organisation that educates children about disabilities), etc., were either cancelled or renegotiated. While some of these changes could have been driven by economic imperatives, there was also a clear ideological drive. One stakeholder explained the interplay:

‘Well, why am I [the CEO] paying out teachers to do it – my teachers should be able to do it’. He [the CEO] doesn’t accept this concept of outsiders, or that there are actually people who are experts in certain areas So the load on the teachers is also becoming more. Expectations are becoming more. FAMSA (Family Life Centre) won’t come into the school. It’s ideological as well. ‘I [the CEO] don’t want some non-Jewish person coming into the school, discussing sexuality’.⁵²

The social workers felt that it was important to have experts to deal with issues of sexuality because it is perceived that children prefer discussing sexuality with outsiders. While initially it was agreed that FAMSA would train the Jewish Studies teachers and the social workers to deal with sex education, it was later decided that rabbis and religious psychologists would undertake the training. Consequently, workshops were run during school hours for a few days, but in the end the Jewish Studies teachers and the social workers refused to take on the task of sex education. As a result, sex education was non-existent by the time I concluded the collection of the data for this research.

Reducing the cost of community services

The Jewish community schools ran a few programmes that promoted the notion of care, such as care for the less advantaged, especially among the black community in South Africa (henceforward the outreach programmes); care for the pupils’ stable emotional growth, as provided by a team of social workers and psychologists working full time in the system; and care for those who could not afford the fees, as was managed by the subsidy programme.

⁵² Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:40 (726:755). Codes: Restructuring - financial or ideological].

The outreach programme

Following the restructuring the outreach programmes stopped completely at the primary schools. Some isolated activities did take place, but it was up to the individual principals, teachers or parents to organise and fund them. At the high schools, teachers insisted on continuing with the outreach programme '*despite the Board rather than with the Board*'.⁵³

The outreach programmes involved providing pupils and teachers from some black schools with educational enrichment and sharing some school facilities such as sporting and IT, with those who could not afford to have them. Funding for the programmes was usually donated; teachers and pupils volunteered to participate; and in some cases teachers received an honorarium from the schools for the extra hours put in. The schools usually financed the transportation. Teachers and principals had different views as to whether these programme were effective or whether it was merely tokenism. For one manager, however, the importance of these programmes was the educational message they gave to Jews living in South Africa. While communal schools are by definition inward looking, she felt that it was important for Jewish children to develop a sense of civic responsibility:

I think that it is a pity, because we are living in a non-Jewish country and we need to be part of the society. We need to show that we care and ... it is important to connect with non-Jewish people, and to give and to care, if we want to be accepted – we have to accept, and not be insular ...⁵⁴

In this view curtailing the outreach programmes indicated parochialism and greater separation between the Jewish community and the broader South African society.

Social services

The social workers' working days had been cut and their salaries were adjusted to match their reduced workloads. For the CEO this was another community service that could be privatised and charged to the parents:

Social Services – I don't know myself what role it will play. It's clearly a division that has become very large, very expensive, and there may be better ways of doing

⁵³ Teacher, 26 August 2002 [Document 31:32 (731:746). Codes: Cost cutting - outreach - non-Jewish organisation].

⁵⁴ Manger, 14 May 2002. [Document 3:251 (870:882). Codes: Cost cutting - outreach - non-Jewish organisation].

part of it ... But some of the services offered, could be ... charged for at medical aid rates and reclaimed.⁵⁵

Stakeholders had conflicting attitudes with regard to this change. Some respondents objected to streamline the services, as there was a perceived need for social services in view of the crime problem in South Africa, the growing number of hijackings that affected school children and their families, as well as the high rate of divorce. It was perceived that children had become more anxious than they were before, that the teachers were not equipped, and that they had neither the energy nor the time to deal with all these issues. Some respondents maintained that since the services had been reduced, children's behaviour had deteriorated. Other respondents were not sure whether there was a need to have the social workers that often. One stakeholder had mixed feelings, which exemplify the ambiguity between the notion of a community school and the notion of a private school. She objected to what she perceived as a sense of "entitlement" on behalf of parents to expect services from the schools, while at other private schools these services constituted an additional charge:

I think they [the social workers] do a wonderful job but I think there is a similarity there to the remedial. The parents expect this service and then when they get it they act as if – there is this sense of entitlement at the school – and this is what shocked me ... [at other schools] everything extra is extra ... and yet somehow people are always saying 'Oh these fees' and 'What are we paying for if we don't have this, that and the other'.⁵⁶

Subsidies

The audited financial statements indicated that the subsidy level was maintained at just over R7 million in 2001 and 2002.⁵⁷ The CEO claimed to use a formula to determine what each family could afford and what they were supposed to pay. At the same time there was the attitude that families too must make greater sacrifices. Information on subsidies was never forthcoming. It seems that some parents had to take their children out of the schools or increase their contributions, but a mass exodus did not take place. Paradoxically, while subsidies were being limited, there was a parallel effort to bring new children into the system, especially at Victory Park

⁵⁵ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:16 (324:348). Codes: Cost cutting - social services].

⁵⁶ Manager, 28 May 2002. [Document 5:77 (1347:1361). Codes: Cost cutting - social services].

⁵⁷ The annual financial statements for the SABJE for the year ended 31 December 2002. Auditors: Grant Thornton Kessel Feinstein.

in order to increase its enrolment. Board members targeted children at government schools by offering them the opportunity to study at the KD schools for what it would cost them to be at a government school, thereby recreating the same problems that affected the schools before the restructuring. There were some successful recruits and some disappointments, as the following quotation illustrates:

‘Listen Mrs So and So, I didn’t approach you. I don’t need you in the system. I’m trying to help you. I’m not calling you to hear how bad [the school] is. You either want to come to [the school] – if you want to leave your children at Fairways and the government school, why don’t you go to – what’s that place – the old Sandringham Gardens school – Sandringham High, or Sandview or Sandor or whatever they call it’. I said, ‘Go there. There are still some white children there. So go there.’ You see, that is my disillusion.⁵⁸

This citation suggests that the restructuring impacted negatively on the ethos of care. Even though the new management used the traditions and symbols of the past, such as subsidising needy children, those were framed with different meaning. It was not the “care” that each Jewish child would receive a Jewish education, but rather a threat that not being in a Jewish school means being in a predominantly black environment. The lay leader quoted above attempted to increase enrolment by exploiting the fear of deteriorating standards at public schools and the flight of white pupils to private institutions.

Capital expenditure

At the same time that educational and community services were curtailed and streamlined, the Board had invested in capital expenditure. It was felt that because there was no money, the exterior of the schools had been neglected and had not kept pace with the other for-profit modern colleges. I think that in general stakeholders tended to agree with this statement. In my interviews I recorded positive remarks such as the following:

It will be a shop where they will sell uniforms and have fitting rooms for the kids, and professional, it will look good. He has – there was that big tree where we used to park, dangerous, falling over, he had that cut down, he has paved it, he has put beautiful pot plants, not big expensive things ... There [are] carports, covering for the cars ... I think it is that whole look. He has re-carpeted the Board – those carpets were disgusting. He installed new air-conditioners at the Board. You just walk in there and it looks professional.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Honorary officer, 20 August 2002. [Document 41:30 (738:788). Codes: Subsidies].

⁵⁹ Manager, 25 June 2002. [Document 17:25 (658:698). Codes: Capital expenditures].

I think that the general appearance of the school is much better ... I think it's good to have an environment you know, that looks like it's caring about the child. I think that that's more essential.

However, the timing, the manner and the priorities of these expenditures received less support, as was already discussed in the Chapter 5. Moreover, under the pretext of security, new booms were put up at the schools and teachers had to “clock in” and “clock out” as they entered and left the premises. This was perceived to be another measure of control, which did not increase physical security.⁶⁰

In summary, efficiency gains were achieved by reducing waste and over staffing, and by making teachers “work more for less”. Further gains were achieved by curtailing educational input and community services, by diluting the remedial services, by hiring non-specialist teachers and by shifting expenses to the parents. At the same time this section demonstrated that new expenses were created in order to support the glossification and the religious intensification of the schools. This confirms the claim that efficiency is not a neutral measure and it is usually used to advance the interests of one faction of society.

The implementation of these policies was problematic and in many cases the schools changed just enough to comply with the demands before reverting back to their old habits, overtly or covertly. It is evident that the means to create greater efficiency and cost savings were frustrated by the culture of the organisation and by the stakeholders' agency. Fullan (2001:ix) speaks about the leader dilemma: *'On the one hand, failing to act when the environment around you is radically changing leads to extinction. On the other hand, making quick decisions under conditions of mind-racing mania can be equally fatal'*. As was illustrated in Chapter 3, the previous Board was aware of all the problems but failed to act on time to avoid crisis. The CEO, not being part of the school community, was able to apply the cold logic of business in order to save the schools financially. But in the process he lost the trust and loyalty of the employees. This suggests that at times of crisis when stakeholders are required to make great sacrifices, they need a leader rather than a manager; they need integrity rather than charisma. Unfortunately, it is also when a community is

⁶⁰ Teacher, 27 March 2003. [Document 70:15 (461:476). Codes: Capital expenditures].

vulnerable and desperate that it can easily fall into the hands of opportunists who would use the crisis to their own advantage.

Centralisation versus decentralisation

As mentioned in Chapter 3, previous attempts had been made to decentralise the Board, to separate between its national role and the governance of the KD schools and to devolve the decision-making process to school level. However, this was discouraged mostly for ideological reasons and for fear that the schools might lose their exclusive Jewish character and mission. Yet, while the centre continued to possess strategic powers, each school was relatively free to develop its own character. This depended on the principal, the teachers and the student population.

Following the Isaacson Report,⁶¹ which recommended devolution of coordination, there were expectations that decentralisation would eventually follow. It was announced that principals would be given more authority and budgets. Instead, greater centralisation took place. While the “old” professional officers were dismissed,⁶² new functionaries took office. The different titles that were assigned to the newly promoted staff reflected more managerial discourse:⁶³

- The designated Jewish Studies coordinator who had returned from a year of study in Israel took up his new position as the director of Jewish Affairs at the pedagogic centre adjacent to the Board building. An additional Jewish Studies coordinator for the nursery schools and the Foundation Phase (grades 0–2) was appointed. She was later (January 2003) promoted to become a principal of one of the nursery schools.
- The coordinator of Special Needs, whose department the Isaacson Report described as a model of coordination based at school level, was promoted to become a supervisor and received an office adjacent to the Board building. Significantly, she was unable to achieve her notion of supervision and resigned a year later.

⁶¹ See Chapter 3. Brian Isaacson, *Aligned Leadership* (22 March 2001). SABJE – Re-positioning, Review and Recommendations, Unpublished printed copy of slides.

⁶² Namely, the director; the financial director; the administrative director; the coordinator of General Studies; the coordinator of Hebrew Studies and the coordinator of Social Services.

⁶³ There could be some inaccuracies with regard to the functions of the new Board employees. My information was gathered from various sources outside the Board such as casual conversations, the Board’s telephone directory, other interviewees’ reported dealings with the Board and letters, including a letter from the CEO, dated 22 June 2001, titled: Proposed restructuring of the SABJE – New structure of SABJE.

- Two newly appointed financial managers replaced the financial director. The responsibilities of the existing human resources officer increased to include teachers' remunerations and contracts.
- The coordinator of Social Services replaced a social worker that retired at one of the schools and continued with her reduced coordination activities. It was clear that she was able to maintain her job because economically she absorbed one salary at the school level and was able to work "more for less," and she was politically "neutral" since her office was not in the Board's main building and she was not involved at executive level.
- The administrative functions of the Board were distributed between: the new bursar and his new assistant; the CEO's brother-in-law whose function was unclear to my informants and who left the Board the following year; the new public relations officer; the retired principal of the KDL High School who was put in charge of the King David Schools' Foundation, collecting funds for needy students; and later on (May 2002) to the retrenched ex-deputy principal of the KDLJ school who had no definite role but handled various functions such as debt collection, the Skills Development Levy and the Board conference. The latter three were employed on a part-time basis.

The dismissal of the Hebrew and General Studies coordinators indicated the decentralisation of the secular/national and the academic functions, but at the same time the new appointments pointed towards greater centralisation of both religion and finance. It is therefore safe to argue that the restructuring was both economic/managerial and ideological from its inception, though this may not have been perceived as such by a number of respondents. As soon as the CEO encountered resistance, he attempted to control every aspect of the organisation, including the speakers at each school assembly, despite of the on-going rhetoric of decentralisation. In the next citation the CEO spoke about '*total freedom*' for the schools, yet he could not name one function that would be devolved. Significantly, while policies would be made at the centre, the principals could choose *how* to implement them:

[A principal] believes that each school should have total independence in their own running, and I made it clear it will never be in my time. There are certain areas that affect this organisation – ethos, Jewish Studies, Hebrew. The decision on who studies Hebrew at what level is not a school decision; it is a common decision. The implementation of the Jewish programme – it's a common decision. On the other

hand there may be other decisions that you can leave to the school. For example ... we believe the school should have sport of a certain level, *how that is achieved* by the headmaster, it doesn't come to the very core of our organisation, as long as it's taking place. And there may be others that we say you have *total freedom* on. *But* for example, SRCs (student representative council) – I already told the headmasters. I believe it's a common core decision and they are going to have to sit together – and I don't care if they hit each other – but at the end of it, they have got to come up with an accepted principle that will go throughout the whole system ... And if they can't at the end of the session, I make the compromise. And that's it. But we can't have differing systems. Sorry.⁶⁴ (My emphasis.)

By decentralising the implementation of policies initiated at the centre, the CEO was able to distance himself from unpopular decisions; the messengers were blamed for mishandling the process. Thus, for example, the school management was blamed for the unhappiness surrounding the cancellation of long leave:

What wasn't correct, is that [the manager] suddenly started phoning people in the middle of the holidays, and telling them: 'You will be on leave from the 1 September to the whatever'. It was handled incorrectly – not by the Board – but internally ... It was flung at us ... [The CEO] said leave must be used up. There's a way of them managing that information.⁶⁵

The next quotation was quite telling. I was interviewing an Employee Forum representative on the day she had to pass on information about salary increases. She described how she had to deal with people's anger and frustration:

There was a strain ... We've been waiting for this increase since the beginning of the year – and today was the day. Ya! There's been a lot of tension, I feel, and me, I had to report back after the Employee Forum on Friday, and some of the teachers were up in arms. I reported that there would be a rise from 0 to 25%, which never took place anyway, I'm sure. There was great outcry. I was being screamed at. And I said: 'Please understand, I'm only the reporter. I'm just reporting back. It's not me. You can negotiate yourself. You can go and see for yourself, but I'm just reporting'. But there are quite a few hot-headed people ...⁶⁶

The evidence suggests that the CEO was also hiding behind the schools in order not to come out into the open about the ideological changes that he planned to institute, as one respondent illustrates:

For example, singing – girls cannot sing, and if they sing it must be in a group and behind a microphone. And you must not say that it is because of the *hallacha*, but you must say that it is school policy. And it is a way that parents should not go to him, so the school must take the responsibility and in short the school becomes the punching bag, the one in the middle.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Recorded consultation with CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:98 (3166:3193). Codes: Centralisation vs. decentralisation].

⁶⁵ Teacher, 24 October 2002. [Document 49:7 (304:333). Codes: CEO - instructions misinterpreted by messengers; Process - teachers to take long leave].

⁶⁶ Teacher, 30 July 2002. [Document 48:21 (452:488). Codes: Teachers - salaries].

⁶⁷ Manager, 14 May 2002. [Document 3:221 (111:129). Codes: Board - hiding behind the schools].

Based on the changes in the South African context towards decentralisation and the establishment of democratic school governing bodies (SGB), many parents expected the establishment of similar structures. The PTA meetings became a forum to express these demands. In reaction, the CEO attempted to undermine the power of the PTAs by restricting them to fundraising alone, and by not allowing them to discuss school matters at their meetings. As alluded to in the Prologue, some schools obliged but others did not. Moreover, the Board took over the collection of the PTA levy and only redirected a small amount back to the schools. Once the Board was in charge of the money, the PTAs' powers were further restricted.

To sum up, despite expectations of decentralisation, a movement in the opposite direction took place, whereby the CEO attempted to control every financial, educational and ideological aspect of the schools. However, while decisions were made at the centre, it was up to the schools to implement them without any assistance or direction. It is evident that the rhetoric of decentralisation and the practice of centralisation was meant to change those in power, to weaken the professional voice and any voice that had some knowledge or was vociferous enough to offer some kind of resistance, and to allow the CEO to hide behind the schools, thereby distancing himself from unpopular changes. The evidence also reveals an attempt to silence the voice of the parents and the broader community. Attempts to control what stakeholders said or thought to that extreme could only be considered as a desperate move indicating a loss of control as well as a sign of irrationality. It is clear that this kind of authoritarianism would eventually burst in a context where the concepts of democracy, decentralisation, transparency, accountability and a stakeholder society had become common buzz words.

Goal setting

The goals and the mission of the Jewish community schools tended to be broad enough and vague enough to accommodate the diversity that existed in the community. This is referred to by Strike (1999) as *'thick and vague constitutive values'*.⁶⁸ As was mentioned in Chapter 3, the main mission of the Board was to provide *'Jewish education based on broadly national traditional lines, it being*

⁶⁸ For the discussion see Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

understood, however, that the Board will render educational service to any institution which requires and applies for such service'.⁶⁹ This phrasing was selected as a compromise formula in order to appease the different factions within the community, that is, the Orthodox, the Reform and the secular Zionists. It also had an economic rationale, as it meant *'not to frighten the people off, because the average South African out there was more interested in the rugby team than anything else'*.⁷⁰ Subsequently, the Board's *'statement of philosophy'* dealt with ethos rather than with clearly defined goals, and with lofty and vague ideals that could be open to interpretation:

Our goal is to develop well integrated young Jewish men and women who are moral, ethical and humane, observant of their religion and their culture, earnest in their relationships with God and man, committed to Jewish survival and Israel's well being, conscious of their responsibilities to South Africa and her people, advocates of the best that Western civilisation represents, stimulated to make learning a lifelong occupation and endowed with academic skills and personal qualities to fully realise their potential.⁷¹

As alluded to in Chapter 2, a community's ethos is often elusive and implicit, but it creates a narrative for the members of that community. Often, members of the community can understand and act upon the narrative, yet cannot describe it in words or in any tangible manner. However, when the schools' ethos was threatened by the restructuring many respondents were able to verbalise what could be lost. The loss was mostly described in terms of social capital, care, relations among stakeholders, social conscience and all-round education. Respondents emphasised the arts and culture, the shows and assemblies as the spirit and the ethos of the school that had been threatened. The following quotations attempt to provide some respondents' experiences of King David. They reveal a mixture between what was described by one respondent as the "conceptual" Jewish community and the "real" Jewish community. The conceptual community school referred to the acculturation of children in terms of Jewish values, having a respect for and sense of belonging to the Jewish community, as well as a sense of Jewish historicity. While in the real Jewish community, parents wanted their children to have success in sports *'and to be achievers, and if they are not achievers, at least to be happy, and if they are not happy, at least to participate ...'*. The respondent was not sure whether these two

⁶⁹ Minutes of the fourth session of the seventh national conference of the SABJE, 4 March 1945.

⁷⁰ Other stakeholder, July 2002. [Document 25:21 (440:530). Codes: Ethos - national-traditional].

⁷¹ SABJE Strategic Planning 1993.

views of the community were completely out of sync or whether there was some congruence between the real and the conceptual community.⁷²

No-one can actually define what it is about King David that you choose to send your child there ... For me it was because I was there ... A lot of people can't define why King David – but they know that they were happy there ... But also what I find with King David and ex-Davidians, is that there's a bond ...⁷³

I think that the Jewish ethos is learning ... I think that we have to maintain the ethos of the school as a nurturing environment. It's not just the results that are important. It's the Jewish nurturing – charity, nurturing ...⁷⁴

My son said to me just the other day ... how fantastic [the school] is – and he said: 'Dad, you know that every teacher knows my name' ... it's those sorts of issues, which you can't measure. It's not an academic outburst, but there are so many added values ... and it's significant.⁷⁵

I've defined [the ethos] as clear as a bell. That it's the bridge. That it's something which is sufficiently amenable and accessible to the whole community. It's a bridge that people can climb onto just by going to the school. And then you can decide how you walk across the bridge.⁷⁶

The essence of King David is a community school, not a college. It works on a tremendous amount of interaction between staff and pupils and staff and staff.⁷⁷

I remember in the apartheid days – people at the Board going mad with [the principal] bringing in extremely left-thinking people to make statements, but they were making the correct social statements – so King David was at the forefront of social consciousness in education – academic education. The arts and the culture and the links to Israel – everything was in place.⁷⁸

And there's just a soul at that school that you won't find ... Yes, It's been good for some [children] and not for others. I just feel that it's a family. It really is a family. And your joy is everybody's joy – your sorrow is everybody's sorrow. And that's what Jewish community life here is all about.⁷⁹

I just loved the rugby. They were great at rugby. We won.⁸⁰

If I had children at school age now I would send them to King David. Not for the academics – for this I rely on the children, but for the social development. To be among Jewish people; for all the extra things that they are doing; for the encouragement that they are receiving.⁸¹

⁷² Other stakeholder, 10 January 2002. [Document 7:97 (131:184). Codes: KD - as a community school].

⁷³ Parent, 15 November 2002. [Document 44:52 (1725:1740). Codes: Ethos - definition, static or fluid].

⁷⁴ Teacher, 14 April 2002. [Document 13:57 (601:618). Codes: Ethos - individual attention].

⁷⁵ Parent, 21 October 2002. [Document 43:5 (92:100). Codes: Ethos - individual attention].

⁷⁶ Parent, 31 January 2003. [Document 63:27 (610:633). Codes: Ethos - national-traditional].

⁷⁷ Teacher, 27 May 2002. [Document 14:21 (438:453). Codes: Ethos - relationships and interaction; Ethos – teachers' dedication].

⁷⁸ Community leader, 8 May 2002. [Document 10:32 (393:410). Codes: KD - all round education].

⁷⁹ Teacher, 8 January 2003. [Document 51:6 (316:332). Codes: Ethos - relationships and interaction].

⁸⁰ Community leader, 18 July 2002. [Document 23:35 (756:757). Codes: KD - stakeholders' expectation of schools].

⁸¹ Other stakeholder, 20 December 2001. [Document 62:1 (13:17). Codes: KD - reputation - general].

As implied in the last citation, the ethos was hardly about academic excellence, even though the schools had to produce results to ensure that pupils received ‘*a good all-round education which can get them the jobs in Australia, Canada and the USA ...*’,⁸² or at least to ensure that the pupils would go to university, or ‘*have sufficient skills to earn a living*’.⁸³ As a matter of fact, the means to achieve these academic results were often criticised by parents. Some parents compensated for this deficit by sending their children to extra lessons, either at or outside of the schools. While there were pockets of excellence and some exceptional teachers, it was perceived that some families benefited from those more than others.

I don’t believe that the King David education is perfect ... I’ve had three children at King David ... my baby could study [my other daughter’s] notes and get 100% for all her tests – because in a time frame of thirteen consecutive years, the notes have not changed.⁸⁴

I don’t think you can rest on your laurels, on the fact that you have done well. What is the big deal? Is there one Jewish day school in the world that gets bad results? I have never heard of one ... I say to them, you really want to know how they got those results, go see how many of them are going to extra lessons in how many subjects ... The children are motivated, they come from very motivated homes. They come from generations of educated parents. They come with a whole genetic inheritance of thousands of years. What, are they going to do badly? If they didn’t get these distinctions, then you have to have an inquiry.⁸⁵

I don’t know. What is so amazing though ... is how much success King David does have even under all these machinations, all these struggles. I mean, it is a successful school. It always makes me wonder ... how they do it.⁸⁶

It was a wonderful institution but they rested on their laurels, they never moved forward, there was no challenging leadership anywhere. It was one *Schlimazel* (useless person) to another *Schlimazel* and that is what happened. And if you went in with exciting ideas you were stamped on.⁸⁷

Based on the above quotations one is tempted to describe the KD schools as “sand schools” (Slavin, 1998). These are complacent schools in which the school staff feels as though it is doing and has always done a good job. These schools generally serve high socio-economic status areas, yet may not be tapping into the full potential of their students. Slavin argues that most reforms in these types of schools are doomed to

⁸² Parent, 8 November 2002. [Document 32:5 (262:284). Codes: KD - all round education].

⁸³ Community leader, 28 January 2003. [Document 60:16 (433:437). Codes: KD - reason for attending the schools].

⁸⁴ Lay leader, 20 August 2002. [Document 41:21 (577:596). Codes: KD - academic achievements].

⁸⁵ Manager, 11 March 2003. [Document 68:29 (1031:1085). Codes: KD - academic achievements].

⁸⁶ Manager, 28 May 2002. [Document 5:44 (674:690). Codes: KD - academic achievements].

⁸⁷ Teacher, 17 July 2002. [Document 35:3 (27:35). Codes: KD - need to be improved].

failure since it is like *'building a structure out of sand'*. Sand schools are not necessarily ones that are failing. Complacent “sand schools” are almost by definition succeeding with many students and many have islands of real excellence.

For one observer, the ethos was so bland that it did not say anything.⁸⁸ Whether or not the ethos should be made more explicit was debated by one respondent who felt that teachers, *'not only the Jewish Studies or Hebrew teachers and not only the Jewish teachers in the school – have a very keen sense of what the school is there for'*.⁸⁹ He concluded that:

I think that had it been or were it more explicit – it could be stronger. I always felt that there was a great deal of convergence among all teachers and all members of staff in terms of that. But it's very often implicit convergence ... If one can talk about it more one can be aware of it more ... I think there was – or is – a problem with the ethos of the school. And I think that somebody once said that we are now going to talk about all those things that go without saying – to make sure that they are still going ...⁹⁰

A report by an Israeli Task Force⁹¹ remarked on the same ambivalence between mission and ethos. It maintained that at times the word “ethos” was used for conservative purposes and as a way to resist change:

If ethos means no more than a comfortable accommodation with traditional forms of South African Jewish identification and religiosity, then leaving things alone may be inappropriate if those traditional forms of Jewish life no longer speak adequately to a new generation and are no longer viable.⁹²

The CEO was quick to use this vulnerability and ambivalence by questioning the existence of an ethos and its implementation. Confused and implicit identity became a non-identity. In the following excerpts the CEO reiterated his contractual obligation not to change the ethos, but after debating it with himself he decided that there was no ethos to preserve. This again is reminiscent of the tactics used by fundamentalist

⁸⁸ Other stakeholder, 9 December 2002. [Document 22:13 (193:216). Codes: Ethos - definition, static or fluid].

⁸⁹ Other stakeholder, 10 January 2002. [Document 7:6 (209:222). Codes: Ethos - definition, static or fluid].

⁹⁰ Other stakeholder, 10 January 2002. [Document 7:109 (228:297). Codes: Ethos - definition, static or fluid].

⁹¹ In 2001, the Israeli government sent task force teams to South Africa, Argentina and France – three countries that were perceived to be affected by global and local conditions – in order to have a better understanding of the needs of the communities and to offer assistance. The task force to South Africa arrived in November, in the midst of the retrenchment process. It consisted of three professors representing diverse religious attitudes with vast experience and knowledge in Jewish Education. Their report related to the whole Jewish education system in South Africa.

⁹² The Jewish Agency for Israel (February 2002). Task Force Report: The South African Jewish Day School System, (Final Draft). 24.

groups to destabilise the identity of those whom they would like to convert, as described in Chapter 3.

It's 100% clear that the ethos and mission of the school remains unchanged. Rather than that, it may be intensified. So in other words, if you ask different parties, 'What is the ethos of the school?', most parties give different views. [There is a] lack of understanding of the position of King David and a perceived need to have a vague definition so as to include all the community ...⁹³

But it's critical that those things that we stand for – the so-called ethos – that we are seen to be doing well ... But I can tell you the information I've got already at the moment doesn't paint a very pretty picture of the implementation of the ethos. So in other words, if we might change the ethos – the actual ethos, the defined ethos – there won't be one ... And I will tell you my vision. My vision is to enact singularly, the most superb school of its type in the world. I think we can do it.⁹⁴

Let me tell you in terms of the prescribed ethos and mission of the school ... I had a look at the wording of all that stuff inside. And to me, you have to question whether we have been carrying out that mission – I certainly will not – I am not introducing a new ethos, but it's my intention certainly to make sure that the ethos as it is at least defined, is implemented ... to make that workable ... So I am saying, whatever we are doing, it's not just money. It's if we have an ethos, be open. If we've been wrong, let's correct it.⁹⁵

At the same time that the implicit and “wishy-washy” ethos of the “imagined” community schools was invalidated, the CEO prescribed new goals and attempted to impose them by introducing a new employee contract. It was envisaged that through the contract the CEO would be able to stipulate and manage the conduct of the employees, their dress code as well as their teaching habits and relations with pupils. It took two years for the CEO, the labour lawyer and the representatives of the Employee Forum to reach an agreement on what constituted appropriate behaviour. The core values and the goals of the organisation were listed on the front page of the contract. These were not negotiable. The new clear goals of the King David schools were to provide:

- a superior Jewish and secular education;
- a knowledge of the Hebrew language;
- an appreciation of our relationship to Israel;
- a growth in the self-discipline of our pupils;

⁹³ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:18 (54:81). Codes: CEO - views of ethos].

⁹⁴ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:22(493:533). Codes: CEO - views of ethos].

⁹⁵ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:65 (1935:1984). Codes: CEO - views of ethos].

- extra lessons;
- a pleasant environment for pupils and teachers and staff;
- a close liaison with parents;
- extra-mural activities; and
- social services.⁹⁶

The new goals represent a shift from the ideal of developing the character and personality of the student, to a product that takes the aspirations of the “real Jewish community” into consideration, such as a pleasant environment, extra lessons, extra murals and liaison between providers and customers. In the list of goals a “superior” Jewish education is on the same level as “extra lessons”, thus merging the “conceptual” and the “real” Jewish community into one. The prescribed goals indicate a shift in thinking from goals as long-term ideals to goals as mostly measurable products.

Another important issue that had to be decided was the borders of the school community. Who were the clientele? To whom did the school belong? This also had an economic imperative as once the clientele was defined there was no necessity to provide for diverse needs. One example was the exclusion of pupils with learning disabilities as described earlier in this chapter. Narrowing the “broadly national-traditional” religious base of the schools could also be economically beneficial, as the schools could focus on a more defined level of observance without catering to different desires.

A discussion as to whether the “broadly national-traditional” ideology of the schools should be changed, never took place in public. The Orthodox establishment could not accept pluralism or relativism and would not even discuss it. For one *Ohr Sameach* rabbi, this pluralistic definition was so broad that it could easily include “Jews for Jesus” and Reform Jews. He even added secular Jews to the list of those who think that they are Jews, indicating an extreme fundamentalist approach.⁹⁷ The respondent below sends a message of exclusion to all those members of the school community who would not adhere to the Orthodox dogma:

I think there is a difference between Jewishness and Judaism and I think where maybe the day schools have failed is that they have promoted Jewishness; you get a

⁹⁶ Employee manual, SABJE. Various drafts from 24 October 2001–31 May 2003.

⁹⁷ Jewish day school – what defines success? *SA Jewish Report*, 21–28 March 2003.

good education; you have a nice *Bar-Mitzvah*, but I don't think they have been as successful in promoting Judaism ... [They promoted] the ethnicity and Jewish South African culture. They've done it well and I don't think they have done too badly on the religion, I just think its too open-ended ... I know this may sound a bit harsh but [the Reform] must start their own schools ... I think a school has a right to define itself in a way that doesn't necessarily make everybody happy, but it has a constitution and if you feel that you have particular needs that are not being met by the school, then you have every right to start your own school, which they have not done, they've just shouted from the sidelines. I don't think that anything realistically will change. I don't think it will make one iota of difference to the daily life of a kid at the school. [*CH: So why change?*] So that there is a parameter. So it won't be dependant on who happens to be the principal at the time, who happens to be the Jewish Studies teacher at the time.⁹⁸

Realising the adverse affect that the notion of pluralism had on the Orthodox establishment, the Israeli Task Force attempted to offer its support to the school community in order to address what it perceived as '*the splintering of the community*'.⁹⁹ The Task Force recommended a decentralised system that would respect the diversity in the community, whereby each individual school should have its own ideological vision within the broad parameters of the school system as a whole.¹⁰⁰ The lay leaders refused to contemplate this suggestion. They maintained that there was no splintering in the community. The perceived fragmentation of the community was denied and the narrative of "homogenous" community prevailed:

While there has been a remarkable surge on the part of a significant minority of the younger generation towards increased religious knowledge and practice, this has not led, as the task force indicates, to a schism throughout. The non-Orthodox, whether teachers or pupils, are not antipathetic to *Ba'alei Teshuvah*; on the contrary... parents are quite happy that their children wish to be more observant than they are.¹⁰¹

The Task Force was also concerned with the exclusion of Jewish academics from the governance of the schools, and the hegemony of rabbis in the leadership of the schools. While the '*regrettable tension between the "intellectual elite" and the mainstream Jewish community*' was acknowledged, it was justified by the participation of leading Jewish academics and intellectuals in pro-Palestinian

⁹⁸ Other stakeholder, 26 March 2003. [Document 66:20 (919:1028). Codes: Conference - changing the constitution].

⁹⁹ The Jewish Agency for Israel (February 2002). Task Force Report: The South African Jewish Day School System, p.2.

¹⁰⁰ A similar approach towards diversity was adopted by the Israeli educational system, which since the 1990s had been based of the "politics of difference" (Sabar & Mathias, 2003).

¹⁰¹ Task Force Report, The South African Jewish Day School System, Comments by Chief Rabbi Harris. Office of the Chief Rabbi, Johannesburg, 21 October 2002.

declarations.¹⁰² Those who might resist the religious “right” were therefore grouped together with the extreme political left and were excluded from the decision-making process.

The suggestions of the Israeli Task Force to acknowledge the diversity within the community and to reflect on ‘*a clear vision of what the schools are about and the education to which they aspire*’ (p.24) were disregarded. The pretext was that discussion and open debate would destabilise the community. This familiar pretext allowed those in powerful positions to determine the goals of the schools, and subsequently, the future of the Jewish community:

There is a reluctance to discuss these things so as to not destabilise the community. [The task force] was trying to talk about the importance of vision ... what is your vision of the school? There is a reluctance – not only at KD – to talk in these terms. I believe that there are some lay people who feel that they will say to the parents what kind of schools they are trying to create and the parents must give their unlimited commitment to this type of school¹⁰³

When the Task Force returned to South Africa to report back on its findings, the restructuring process was at its lowest ebb; the lay leaders were trying to re-build the image of the CEO and to ensure a smooth process of election at the 27th Board Conference. Unsurprisingly, the report was not allowed to be distributed to parents and teachers:

Because the report says: ‘You sit down. You decide what you really want. When you’ve got your strategic plan, vision, mission in place, let’s pick out what we can help you with, and do it’. But the King David’s ... are scared to go out to a public strategic planning process, which is what they should do – what they really need. But they are not yet sufficiently confident to do so. Because there are big issues in the King David’s. ... I think the vice-chairperson came to these meetings with us, and didn’t say a word, other than the fact that she didn’t think that it was politically the right time because of the [Board] Conference to enter into a wide discussion about mission.¹⁰⁴

The evidence shows that the restructuring was an attempt, first, to change the goals of the schools from long term and vague to measurable and tangible, and second, to narrow the borders of the community and thereby provide a standardised and unified type of education that had clear financial and ideological benefits. Setting clear goals and defining borders are instrumental for the establishment of a close religious community. This creates synergy with the corporate practice whereby schools need to

¹⁰² The Chief Rabbi referred to a group in Cape Town that had signed a declaration of ‘Not in my name’ against the Israeli policy towards the Palestinians.

¹⁰³ Other stakeholder, 9 December 2002. [Document 22:3 (48:77). Codes: Process - creating a vision].

¹⁰⁴ Lay leader, 28 October 2002. [Document 30:46 (330:342). Codes: KD - mission].

define their core business for efficiency gains. It is evident that the voices of the parents or teachers were not taken into consideration, and that the goals were set by the Orthodox establishment by restricting any open debate and marginalising those who might have a different idea, especially academics.

Once the borders are defined, there is a danger that the schools might move towards becoming a “total community”, thereby controlling every aspect of the pupil’s life. It is in this light that one could view the interference of the CEO with the secular/Zionist youth movement, *Habonim*, described in the Prologue. One *Ohr Sameach* rabbi, who defended the CEO’s position with regard to the youth movement, argued:

If one is spending so much money in order to run a Jewish day school, surely the children should be exposed to Jewish practices and values and therefore the Jewish Board of Education should be entitled to question whether the children are theoretically being exposed to the opposite values by a youth movement ... I accept that the school does not work in a vacuum; it is part of the trilogy that has to impact on the child. The three are the school, home and other institutions, such as the *shul* and youth movements. These have to work together to produce a proud Jew.¹⁰⁵

Accountability

Many stakeholders mentioned the notion of accountability, only to protest about its absence. The perceptions were that the CEO was not accountable to anyone, that the lay leaders who brought him in were not accountable, that the Board members who caused the financial loss were not accountable, etc. There was an on-going demand from parents for accountability and corporate governance. This could be explained by the corporate background of many middle-class Jewish parents and by the hegemony of the discourse. At the same time that the leadership was perceived as not being accountable, many stakeholders agreed with the CEO that teachers needed to become accountable. The following voice of an honorary officer recommended that business practices, such as job description, would make teachers more accountable and the system more equitable. It further confirms what has been suggested in the previous chapter, namely, that respondents accepted the notion that the “school should run like a business” even though they acknowledged some limitations in the approach:

[The CEO demands] that people become accountable and responsible within their area ... I was horrified coming from a corporate environment where I worked for many years ... but you know – something like a job description, it doesn’t really exist for anybody ... If we were to run as a separate business unit, I think all of those

¹⁰⁵ Jewish day school – what defines success? *SA Jewish Report*, 21–28 March 2003.

things would be crucial ... You've got to have jobs defined, described. Areas of responsibility and accountability clearly delineated ... It must happen at Crawford¹⁰⁶ ... I think that is how they operate ... You can't have one person at Linksfield earning the same as at Victory Park and doing half the work or whatever. I think you've got to have some kind of balance across the board. That's where your job descriptions would help immensely if you knew what people were meant to do, and what their expectations were and it was laid out. ... I mean you had to break down every competency – to the things that they did in terms of the actual – the measurable, and to the immeasurable. [*Ch: How would you measure their passion for teaching and care for children?*] It's harder yes ... they have to have a passion for teaching¹⁰⁷

The intention was to monitor teachers' accountability through an appraisal system. It was envisaged that performance-related payment would replace the automatic bonus system (13th cheque). The new system was said to “recognise human worth” and to motivate teachers to achieve better results from the pupils. The automatic bonus system was perceived as inefficient and expensive:

Sustainability is a problem in our system at the moment. Why? Because the bonus is given automatically ... we need to get away from an automatic system that automatically rewards, because ten years ago the person was good. Example – I know that matric distinctions are not the be all and end all ... However, there is nothing wrong in saying that for a matric teacher, one of the methods of recognition is a reward in that regard. Another possibility would be recognition [when] nobody fails a subject ... King David needs a system of recognising those people who put in the extra effort ... I am saying by the time our process is finished, there will be a pool of resources available to reward the people who are doing that work ... What I do say is you need to have a method of recognising human worth. It can't be arbitrary. Arbitrariness gives rise to nepotism.¹⁰⁸

There were those members of staff, especially in managerial positions, who clearly supported the idea of accountability and attempted to find ways to use appraisal forms in their schools. Other teachers were not that enthusiastic about the appraisal system, especially since they were told that this would be done through pupil and peer assessments. The primary school teachers specifically disagreed that young children should be evaluating their work. However, none of my interviewees demonstrated a deep understanding of the concept or had a clear idea of how it was going to be implemented. One teacher who understood the notion of “school as a business” in terms of accountability, had difficulty describing what she would be accountable for. The extract from the interview below reveals that in her perception accountability is equated with control, but not with children learning:

¹⁰⁶ For-profit colleges in South Africa managed by a corporate.

¹⁰⁷ Lay leader, 27 August 2002. [Document 46:16 (659:701). Codes: Teachers - accountability].

¹⁰⁸ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:167 (2971:3008); 20:104 (3557:3593). Codes: Teachers - performance related pay].

Well we have got a 45-page document [refers to contract] to read through ... and they are going through that at the Employee Forum. So it is in place but it is not in place at the moment ... Rules, like there is a dress code, I mean there always was one but nobody ever checked it ... there are things like being punctual ... he says he doesn't mind, you can have a problem with your car once ... He said things, like if you don't just arrive at the class you are then accountable because you are not teaching. Right, it is not that they are counting how many As how many Bs how many Cs you get ... That you have to perform and if you perform below your required state, I think, well my best understanding of that was it wasn't how many kids passed or failed but if you went into the class and then sat and read a book and told them to read and you actually were not bothering to teach you are accountable for that. [It would be checked by] forms that have got to be filled in ... A teacher appraisal form ... They want it that your colleagues will come in and watch you teach but we have all said very firmly that we don't like that idea ... Then there was talk of a student appraisal but everybody came down against that because you know it depends on the teacher's personality ...¹⁰⁹

Another teacher disagreed with the idea of performance-related pay. The talk about accountability and performance-related pay stood in obvious contradiction to her previous notion of commitment. Once she began to relate performance to pay and realised how little she was actually being paid, it became a demotivating factor:

Actually in my entire teaching career I have never equated salary with performance, now I am thinking: What I am taking home, why am I sitting there marking books, why I am sitting at weekends preparing worksheets? You know it is ... the first time ever I have equated salary with my own personal contribution. It has definitely made me aware of it ... And I feel: How come I am working so hard, why am I still putting my whole soul into my work and there is so little recognition from the powers that be ... so little money?¹¹⁰

When teachers spoke about accountability they spoke about commitment. Yet the commitment was more in terms of community loyalty than in terms of their academic input:

I must say since I've come – I suppose it's a different ethos because okay, the majority are all Jewish, and they all go to *shul*, and they all have *Shabbat* together or they visit the next one across the road, or they walk to so and so, and everything is celebrated in a much closer community system of spirit. It's far closer than in a government school where Miss Jones just goes in and it doesn't matter what you are – so there's a different dimension to the system ... [they are not] accountable in terms of their jobs, but they are accountable in terms of their community loyalty ... from an emotive side, which is often irrational.¹¹¹

... and there isn't a wonderful support system there. You know, if you God forbid have a personal problem, they are fantastic – it's a wonderful staff from that point of view. But as far as educational matters are concerned, there's no support – one

¹⁰⁹ Teacher, 26 May 2002. [Documents 8:67 (1132:1155). Codes: Impact - more controls now].

¹¹⁰ Teacher, 27 May 2002. [Document 14:24 (474:496). Codes: Teachers - performance related pay].

¹¹¹ Teacher, 16 July 2002. [Document 38:18 (460:475). Codes: Teachers - relationship with colleagues].

supporting the other and propping each other up. Each one goes into his own classroom and does his own thing. You are on your own.¹¹²

The evidence suggests that teachers at KD tended to work by themselves or in balkanised groups according to their subject or age group. Many of these groups were hierarchical and authoritative, while in some cases there was a real sharing of knowledge and learning. Teachers were internally accountable to ensure that their class did not fall below the average of the other classes. The parents were often used as an “appraisal mechanism”. Teachers knew that they were successful when parents requested them for their children, or at least when parents did not complain about them.

In summary, while there were demands for accountability at all levels of the organisation, the prevalent perception was that there was no accountability. The evidence demonstrates different understandings of the notion. While the notion of accountability was acceptable to those outside the schools and to some managers, teachers mostly resisted the notion, especially as it would involve colleagues evaluating each other. In some cases equating teaching with performance negated the traditional understanding of teachers’ accountability and had a reverse effect on teachers’ performance and commitment.

It is evident that the introduction of external accountability threatens community loyalty and the bonds that exist between staff. However, the data supports Hargreaves’s statement that:

We must not get too nostalgic about the loss of local cultures to impersonal contracts in education. Local educational cultures can be paternalistic, even feudal, in the ways they cultivate compliant loyalty among their teachers and leaders. Too often they have camouflaged incompetence, moving problem teachers and leaders around the system instead of confronting them’ (2003:127).

The relations between the teachers at the schools were mostly on an emotional level with less emphasis on learning and the production of knowledge. The challenge, according to Hargreaves, is not to destroy these relations, but rather to use contracts that would combine mutual personal trust with a professional trust, thereby turning the organisation into a professional learning community.

The chapter so far describes the process by which an attempt was made to quickly change the culture and the structure of the Jewish community schools, and to

¹¹² Teacher, 21 February 2002. [Document 1:67 (1041:1047). Codes: Teachers - relationship with colleagues].

impose changes that would make the schools more defined, efficient and organised. In this envisaged new “McDavid school”, efficiency meant that time and human capital would be optimally managed. Human worth would be rated by appraisal forms, by pupils as well as by colleagues monitoring each other’s performance and behaviour. Quantification and calculability meant that the schools would be divided into cost centres, thereby ensuring that everything could be measured and costed. This would allow for competition between schools and departments and would reward the winners while exposing the losers. Predictability would be achieved by emphasising systems, clear goals and the standardisation of educational outcomes. And the bottom line would be the profits achieved. Yet while this rhetoric was used and was mostly welcomed by stakeholders outside the schools, the school staff experienced it as negatively impacting on them, on the academic input as well as on the community ethos. The following section will therefore explore the impact of this restructuring on the teachers and on the parents.

The impact on the stakeholders

This section examines the impact of all these managerial practices on the stakeholders and how it affected the relationships between them. I applied the notion of impact – that is, the short-term outcomes – as distinctive from effects, which refer to the long-term consequences of an intervention.

Impact on teachers

The data reveals three distinctive phases in the teachers’ responses to the restructuring. The first phase was the trauma and shock of the unexpected restructuring and the ruthless way in which it was imposed. This negatively affected teachers’ self image and sense of security. In this phase teachers’ relationships were strained. This was followed by a period of adjustment, whereby teachers who stayed in the organisation regrouped themselves and became more cohesive, but with an uneasy feeling about forthcoming changes and suspicion about snitchers. In the third phase there was resignation. Teachers felt tired and compromised as, on the one hand, they had complied with the demand to present a positive view of the schools and, on the other hand, they had lost trust in the management of the organisation. While this applied to the majority of teachers there were those teachers who maintained that the restructuring had not impacted on them at all. Certain teachers positioned themselves

strategically to benefit from the new regime and to use the restructuring to advance their own positions. The following quotation represents this view, wherein the respondent gauged the changing scene and decided on how best to handle it and survive:

I mean from the beginning everyone was shouting and carrying on ... I just decided that this is the only person, not the only person, but if not for him nobody would have a job, so it had to be done. My feelings about him – look I have a very good relationship with him and I think he has been quite respectful of me and I am respectful of him ... I didn't know who he was, his record was as a good businessman I thought, well, this man maybe could save it. And then people started to sort of fly out of windows and suddenly it got scary. But it is not arrogance ... I have never been nervous ... I don't like the way he is doing things and there are certain people that I work with that he has just mowed over. I think with him you have got to be quite assertive and you have got to be very visible. If you are not he just discards you. So I don't like the way he is doing it but I can't fault any changes that I have seen; I can only see them as positive changes.¹¹³

A traumatic experience

As alluded to before, teachers generally accepted the rationalisation and the cost-cutting as an unfortunate but necessary move to save the schools. What they mostly rejected was the contemptuous attitude of the CEO, the management by bullying, the lack of communication or consultation, and the impulsive manner in which decisions were made. Moreover, teachers were mostly upset about the encouragement that parents gave to the CEO in his first address to them, in which the CEO attacked the teachers' dedication, privileged working conditions and their teaching abilities. During this first stage of the restructuring the teachers felt isolated and degraded. They felt they had become '*a nonentity*':¹¹⁴

Nobody cares. And I think the bottom line is – everyone has realised: (a) – you are dispensable; (b) – your value is minimal. Whereas [the director] gave you value; there's no value. I mean we've been told that we are replaceable – that there are cogs in the wheel. That we don't work hard enough. That we have to stay after school – that if we leave, it's fine – somebody else will come. And it's happening ...¹¹⁵

The restructuring has made me feel like less of a person in a community and more like a replaceable [part] in a machine ... We were marginalised, we were isolated, we felt pushed around and manipulated and we never felt like a part of it.¹¹⁶

¹¹³ Manager, 25 June 2002. [Document 17:12 (448:461). Codes: Understanding - the only way to save the school].

¹¹⁴ Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:59 (998:1023). Codes: CEO - communication with teachers].

¹¹⁵ Teacher, 23 May 2002. [Document 12:103 (1148:1162). Codes: CEO vs. director; Teachers - dehumanise].

¹¹⁶ Teacher, 27 May 2002. [Document 14:14 (338:343); 14:64 (518:524). Codes: Teachers - dehumanise].

There were those teachers who maintained that the restructuring did not affect them personally, but they observed their colleagues as having different reactions.

I feel that they are tired – that they haven't got that extra reserve. There's been a lot of tension amongst staff where you've seen open arguments in the staff room, which I haven't seen before as much.¹¹⁷

One can also detect a sense of denial, the feeling that “it cannot happen to me because I am good”, or “I am not of that age group”, etc. Yet at the same time there was also a realisation that no one is immune:

I keep on wondering who is going to be next but I am not really worried. Legally you cannot retrench people unless they are not working according to standard, and if they are at a certain age.¹¹⁸

I don't personally feel insecure, because – they cannot pin anything on me. When I do my job, I do it well, but a lot of teachers are very nervous, you know, because we've got someone [refers to principal] who's above me, who keeps on saying – ‘Well, if you don't like it here, you can go and find another job’. And teachers are nervous ... The fact that people were just dispensed with – people who we thought were indispensable, basically. We thought they were very good – were suddenly gone! We couldn't believe it.¹¹⁹

The anxiety, the fear of losing one's job and the feeling of “being left in the dark”, negatively affected the relationships among teachers. There was gossip and a ‘*lot of back stabbing*’ as teachers began to ‘*talk behind each other's backs*’.¹²⁰ It felt as if they were ‘*ying with each other to hang on to the positions*’.¹²¹

It was very much people cutting one another's throats because nobody was sure who was going to stay and people were coming up with illogical things. I felt – you know – this one's older, so this one should go first – and this one is younger – this one should stay.¹²²

The resistance of the teachers to the increased load and the humiliation was expressed by gossip, by overtly or covertly ignoring some commands, or by more subtle ways such as changing the way they taught. Teachers were spending a lot more time in the classroom and were ‘*more conscious of “pacing” themselves differently*’.¹²³ As was

¹¹⁷ Teacher, 21 February 2002. [Document 1:24 (320:328). Codes: Teachers - emotional reaction].

¹¹⁸ Teacher, 24 April 2002. [Document 2:21 (471:477). Codes: Teachers - awareness of labour laws; Teachers – emotional reaction].

¹¹⁹ Manager, 21 April 2002. [Document 4:36 (293:299); 4:54 (467:472). Codes: Teachers - emotional reaction].

¹²⁰ Teacher, 3 July 2002. [Document 18:36 (797:809). Codes: Teachers - relationship with colleagues].

¹²¹ Teacher, 27 May 2002. [Document 14:19 (392:403). Codes: Process - teachers to reapply for their jobs].

¹²² Teacher, 16 July 2002. [Document 38:7 (200:208). Codes: Teachers - relationship with colleagues].

¹²³ Teacher, 24 April 2002. [Document 2:3 (181:186). Codes: Teachers - adapting to change].

mentioned before, various strategies were used to adapt to the new workload, but generally teachers had difficulty in changing old habits:

The [manager] said don't give homework where there is too much checking, but you cannot do it ... it is more for the teacher than for the child because the teacher can see where the difficulties are, where the child's problem is, if it is an individual problem or a class problem, and what they really learnt, not what I taught¹²⁴

One teacher, who from being a "class teacher" had become a "subject teacher", felt demotivated as she could no longer teach the way she liked to:

It all stems from pushing less group interaction, it is almost like 'Shut up, sit down, listen, I am going to teach you, we have got an hour, we have already wasted 10 minutes', you know, 'Shut up and listen', and that is not how I teach. I can spend a whole hour just talking to the kids. I mean, that is really education, but if I do that I can't do anything more. You can do it if you have got your own class and you can juggle your time, so you will do three sums less but at least you will have had a memorable English or History lesson. ... The way I am teaching now is soul destroying for me. Not for all teachers, no problem for some teachers, they always taught like that. I can't say they are not creative, but for me it is very¹²⁵

One manager observed that teachers had become uncooperative. There was '*an unwillingness to just give that little extra of themselves which they always did before*'.¹²⁶ A number of teachers admitted that they did not extend themselves beyond their prescribed work. This usually affected activities beyond the classroom. There was a fear that KD was losing its uniqueness as a private community school:

And I don't know whether the restructuring is now causing us to shift towards the government school type of feeling where you just do your job and get out of there, because you know you've got to do it.¹²⁷

While there was a perception that teachers had lost their commitment, one teacher qualified that there might be '*less commitment to the school [but] the same commitment to the children*'.¹²⁸ She felt that when needed, teachers did '*rise to the occasion. When we were called to a compulsory meeting or a compulsory fun day, the attendance was as usual*'.¹²⁹

The evidence shows that with the restructuring process, teachers became aware for the first time of labour laws and practices. Most of them had never belonged to a union before; labour issues were traditionally resolved internally. Even though the Employee Forum was established a year before the restructuring, teachers only

¹²⁴ Manager, 14 May 2002. [Document 3:77 (571:582). Codes: Teachers - resistance to change].

¹²⁵ Teacher, 27 May 2002. [Document 14:30 (572:589). Codes: Teaching methods].

¹²⁶ Manager, 2 July 2002. [Document 6:93 (477:482). Codes: Teachers - motivation].

¹²⁷ Teacher, 21 February 2002. [Document 1:92 (309:313). Codes: Teachers - commitment].

¹²⁸ Teacher 24 April 2002. [Document 2:50 (237:256). Codes: Teachers - commitment].

¹²⁹ Teacher, 24 April 2002. [Document 2:28 (498:500). Codes: Teachers - adapting to change].

began to take notice of it when it was used to deliver the CEO's decisions to the schools. Most teachers felt inadequate dealing at this level. Some teachers used personal connections to consult lawyers. It was perceived that when a lawyer was involved, the CEO *'back tracked because he knew that he was not right, but he was able to scare some people who did what he said ... Maybe they do not have somebody to help them with the law, and maybe they needed the money so they took anything'*.¹³⁰ In some cases teachers did collect money for legal advice or approached the union. Despite these efforts they felt that they *'got nowhere. Even our union man was fobbed off by [the CEO]'*.¹³¹ The next quotation is quite telling, whereby a teacher who left the school a few years before was rehired as a "contract teacher" and therefore received no perks or job security. The teacher felt isolated, afraid to ask questions in case she would lose her job and unable to deal with labour issues:

A contract teacher – this is a new term for me. I don't understand what it means. A contract teacher ... you sort of feel – you don't feel comfortable actually asking anybody about it ... You know I don't want to have to tread on anyone's feet, because I am a contract teacher ... I just keep quiet and I say nothing. It's difficult. Maybe next term I'll go and I'll say something about it. Basically, you are hitting your head against a brick wall because you just don't get anywhere ... You don't want to broach the subject, because nobody really knows. You know people do not really talk, they keep very much to themselves, and they don't discuss what is going on. It's quite frustrating, because you don't really know whether you've got a position there next year, or what the situation is. ... Eventually I just said to my husband: 'You need to come with me'. ... Because he's in that field, he knows all the avenues they are taking to try and cut their expenses.¹³²

The uncertainty created tension and division among the staff. Some teachers were quiet, others were angry and some just decided to *'ride the storm and see what happens'*. Once the retrenchment process was over the atmosphere became more collegial. The teacher voice below describes that phase. In her perception the *'family kind of feeling'* at her school was able to overcome the adverse consequences of the retrenchment and the staff was able to regroup itself after those *'who did not want to be there anyhow'* left. I read into this a sense of "survivor's guilt" (Vermeulen & Wiesner, 2000) partly manifested in "blaming the victim":

But it was very much a family kind of feeling amongst the staff and it filtered out into the kids. But then when everybody wasn't certain and everybody was nervous because you didn't know what the change would bring, that feeling just disappeared

¹³⁰ Manager, 14 May 2002. [Document 3:84 (609:624). Codes: Teachers - compliance; Teachers - consulting lawyers].

¹³¹ Teacher, 9 January 2003. [Document 53:13 (327:339). Codes: Cost cutting - leave].

¹³² Teacher, 3 July 2002. [Document 18:30 (718:742). Codes: Teachers - emotional reaction; union - support].

... Everybody was suddenly huddled in different corners and talking, you know, then you realised when we came back in January that it was mainly those teachers that were planning to move out on their own anyway that were umming and aahing, should they, shouldn't they, and they were discussing it with this one and they were discussing it with that one. I mean I am not blaming them but that is just what was going on. Then in January you were all there and you saw who was left. You know, we knew who was left but then we actually physically saw the shrink ... Everyone just pulled together and the ethos has come back, that family environment, that helping one another, support; that has all come back.¹³³

Even though it was perceived that those who remained became more unified, the divisions and the suspicion remained:

We've subsequently settled that and I must say that this year the teachers have been more unified than ever before ... they've identified the spokespeople. They've also identified the snitchers in the school ...¹³⁴

Adjustment

Once the teachers had adapted to the harshness of the restructuring they accepted it and resigned themselves to the changing context. Yet there was an underlying atmosphere and '*an air of negativity*'.¹³⁵ The staff was restless. Even though the CEO was hardly seen at the schools there was a feeling that everyone was being watched. Some teachers maintained that the principals began to use similar bullying strategies towards those who did not "toe the line". There was always the feeling of "the still before the storm". Teachers were trying to determine the '*level over which they were not prepared to go*'.¹³⁶ The secular Hebrew teachers felt that they were expected to project a more religious attitude. While more accommodation for religiosity was made, each teacher had her own line that she would not extend herself beyond:

I am not going to lie or pretend that I am religious. I always did the right things and never tried to hurt the *Torah*. I made a combination between Judaism and Zionism. I respect religion, but it is enough, they cannot get into my soul.¹³⁷

However, it seems that teachers were mostly "plodding" along waiting for the schools to settle back into a routine:

You know a lot of teachers – let me try – the teachers are coping with it. I am not saying they are happy with it. There's a lot of teacher burnout. I feel burnt out, I

¹³³ Teacher, 26 May 2002. [Document 8:43 (737:776). Codes: Teachers - emotional reaction; teachers - relationship with colleagues].

¹³⁴ Manager, 2 July 2002. [Document 6:80 (1226:1243). Codes: Teachers - relationship with colleagues].

¹³⁵ Teacher, 8 January 2003. [Document 51:47 (1400:1407). Codes: Impact - underlying - atmosphere].

¹³⁶ Teacher, 23 May 2002. [Document 12:121 (1378:1386). Codes: Teachers - adapting to change].

¹³⁷ Journal entry, 23 July 2002. [Document 55:752 (3038:3044). Codes: Impact - on Hebrew teachers].

really do – but I don't think one can do anything about it until the issue really settles down. To me and to a lot of people, there has to be some kind of finality.¹³⁸

There was no finality. After the major cost-cutting exercises – such as the retrenchments and long leave – seemed to have come to an end, new changes were approaching. The dismissal of the deputy principal at the KDLJ school was a reminder to the teachers that nothing was safe or secure:

Their lives didn't change, what they were having to do didn't change, but a sense of insecurity, a lack of, um, what is the word, identification, all those things happened. People suddenly out of jobs overnight, shattered them and then what happened to [the deputy principal] really rocked the boat for everybody.¹³⁹

As teachers experienced the feelings of loss and insecurity, they resorted to bargaining in order to come to terms with the inevitable:

No I am not really worried because the time has come, so if I have to go I have to go. But it must be done in a way that leaves me feeling not that I have just been replaced but that I have been valued and honoured and appreciated and all the rest of it.¹⁴⁰

It may sound like all ... romantic. I do say to myself every day, that I've got a good job to do – I've got an important job to do, and I'm going to ignore this nonsense – and I believe I'm capable of doing the job, and I have to say that to myself every day. But if you ask me, I probably would be more motivated if it wasn't for [the CEO] ... I do see myself leaving the system in two years' time if [the CEO] is still running the system.¹⁴¹

Certain teachers refused to be subjected to these kinds of working conditions and resigned. Others threatened resignation or felt that if they could find something better, they would move out. There was a '*constant threat of: "I'm going to leave" [from the Hebrew teachers], and they know very well that there's a dearth of Hebrew teachers*'.¹⁴² Teachers' reasons for staying varied. Some stayed because they did not want to change jobs, others because their children were still at the schools. Most stayed because they needed the money and the employment, because they liked the teaching and the holidays between terms, and because they felt that there were no other alternatives. It is safe to say that many of the school staff contemplated leaving their jobs, but felt "locked into" the system.

Once teachers felt "locked in" they began to count the number of years until retirement, or until their children became independent or until any other milestone in

¹³⁸ Manager, 12 July 2002. [Document 24:41 (812:819). Codes: Teachers - emotional reaction].

¹³⁹ Manager, 1 July 2002. [Document 36:23 (1049:1069). Codes: Resistance].

¹⁴⁰ Teacher, 27 May 2002. [Document 14:29 (557:564). Codes: Teachers - dispensable].

¹⁴¹ Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:54 (920:947). Codes: Teachers - motivation].

¹⁴² Manager, 2 July 2002. [Document 6:94 (483:493). Codes: Teachers - leaving the system].

their lives. There were reports of emotional stress and physical illness.¹⁴³ There was anger, depression and helplessness. It seemed that the security net had been pulled out from under teachers' feet. This was even more so for the Victory Park school community:

It's affecting my house – my property. My attitude. Am I going to have a job? Is my friend going to have a job? ... Nobody likes seeing anybody else being retrenched. It's a terribly insecure feeling, and I think it's made everybody feel very insecure ... I just know that it's made everybody feel terribly jittery, whereas before you felt kind of secure in a nice kind of Jewish atmosphere.¹⁴⁴

The loss of security was coupled with the loss of trust in the system. It was observed that these losses were the most significant factors that affected teachers' work:

Because people don't know who to trust in the system ... It obviously impinges on your teaching as well ... They don't know how long they are going to have a job for. They don't know with the talking all the time, whether the school is going to close or if it is going to stay open ... There is insecurity and mistrust. Teachers are by nature conservative human beings; they are not aggressive in their strategies. So they have to feel secure that they are getting a salary every month – that their job is secure.¹⁴⁵

Living in insecurity brings down the level of the work ... I think the teachers' fuses are shorter. And I don't think they are spending as much time as they would like to spend on preparing interesting kinds of lessons. They are just basically fed up.¹⁴⁶

The general perception was that the staff became '*a demotivated, miserable staff, [that] are not enjoying themselves any more*'.¹⁴⁷ Some teachers withdrew into themselves and did not participate in any action organised by the staff:

Right, I say to myself: Why do I want to rock the boat and cause an argument for something which doesn't affect me, or can affect my job? So I'd rather not say it. I keep quiet. So I go into a cocoon.¹⁴⁸

I think everybody was working under fear ... everybody's holding on to their jobs at the different levels, then it's very different. You are not standing together. The message has been passed down. You will do this and you will do that. I think what's happened is – there's an outside fear. Before, everything was blamed on the Board. But now there is a real threat – there is an element of maybe Big Brother is watching you.¹⁴⁹

However, there were certain teachers who managed to keep themselves self motivated, to ignore the negativity and to surround themselves with positive energy:

¹⁴³ Manager, 15 October 2002. [Document 39:65 (1049:1054). Codes: Teachers - emotional reaction].

¹⁴⁴ Teacher, 30 July 2002. [Document 48:27 (577:593). Codes: Teachers - emotional reaction].

¹⁴⁵ Teacher, 16 July 2002. [Document 38:12 (311:327). Codes: Teachers - emotional reaction].

¹⁴⁶ Manager, 21 April 2002. [Document 4:86 (844:850). Codes: Impact - on academic level].

¹⁴⁷ Teacher, 17 July 2002. [Document 35:16 (468:476). Codes: Teachers - motivation].

¹⁴⁸ Teacher, 16 July 2002. [Document 38:36 (1064:1074). Codes: Teachers - compromised].

¹⁴⁹ Teacher, 9 January 2003. [Document 53:19 (443:466). Codes: Fear of losing a job].

Well I tried very hard to turn it around and make it positive. And it kind of worked. It did. Even the other teachers, when we had our meetings – it worked. And I would like to think that I've had so much ... negative things happening to me – that in the big scheme of things, you know, I just felt I had to get on with it. And I got on with it, and I think I took a lot of people along with me.¹⁵⁰

It was unfortunate that this teacher had resigned by the end of the year 2002 and had gone to teach at a private college. Another teacher accepted the changes and welcomed the new opportunities that the restructuring had given her as she took over some functions from teachers who had left. For her:

This year has been a phenomenal year. I mean, it has been stressful but, you know, it is a personality type ... Well I have always enjoyed my teaching ... but more responsibility has been added. So you think, oh gosh, but when you realise that and put it into practice and you get a function to organise and you organise it, and when it goes off well you get a tremendous feeling.¹⁵¹

The teacher quoted below also perceived the changes as positive and was grateful for the opportunities it had given her as she had moved from a teaching position to a managerial position. It is instructive, however, that what she described as professionalism was compliance. Moreover, she intersected her praises of the changes with an acknowledgment of the negativity, which she then attempted to ignore. It seems that the teacher attempted to deny her own moral conscience:

I find the school looks and feels professional and it is also the attitude of the teachers. They might feel intimidated, they might feel anxious, but they themselves have become more professional. They come on time, ... they have to have weekly schedules, they have to have plans, they have to present me with plans. Oh, 100%. People now are more careful. ... The schools look better, they are jacked up, they have got beautiful pictures on the walls, they are clean, the black staff are cleaning because the principals are seeing – you know the place has got a different look. ... If something gets broken, now it gets fixed. ... I mean people don't know what is happening and that makes people feel very insecure. But it has jacked up a lot of people; people have a heavier workload. When I taught three hours a day, I mean it is a disgrace, a disgrace, to get a full salary for teaching three hours a day.¹⁵²

Another teacher could not understand why teachers were resistant to what she perceived to be an improvement. Yet she found it difficult to name what had been improved in teachers' lives except their car parks and the “glossification” of the schools:

We talk about resistance to change; I don't think I've ever experienced anything like what we've been through in the last two years. But a lot of it is in the mind. It's like

¹⁵⁰ Teacher, 8 January 2003. [Document 51:34 (987:1003). Codes: Teachers - motivation].

¹⁵¹ Teacher, 26 May 2002. [Document 8:86 (1461:1482). Codes: Teachers - motivation; Teachers - promotions].

¹⁵² Manager, 25 June 2002. [Document 17:35 (852:907). Codes: Stakeholders - contradicting themselves; Teachers - as professionals].

what they talk about. It's their insecurities. It's their fears. ... In fact, if anything, the quality of their lives has actually improved. [CH: *In what way?*] You know, like in terms of 'parking' (laugh) ... If we want books ... you can ask. Nobody says no. You know, you can actually ... And in general you see the improvement around the school. Things are painted. Things are getting fixed, in the physical appearance of the school.¹⁵³

The positive side of the restructuring was the camaraderie that was created among most of the staff, the feeling that "we are all in it together" in spite of the tensions and divisions:

The good thing that happened is that the staff is kind of hanging in together because we are all feeling the same. There are no little groups going on their own. We are all the same, we are all actually unified against the Board, against [the CEO].¹⁵⁴

The feeling of togetherness was not uncharacteristic to the teachers who traditionally seemed to communicate better on personal issues rather than on academic topics. In some cases these informal personal interactions spilled over into the academic arena as teachers, together with exchanging recipes and gossip, also shared their knowledge and practices. With the increased workload, however, teachers had fewer opportunities for this type of communication:

Now, of course, with the changes in the timetable, we are not free together any more. And it's a big problem, because we used to sit together in a group and say: 'I'm having a problem with x, y and z. How have you done x, y and z?' Now we meet once a week. Not even an hour. The half hour that we had, used to get taken up with meetings with the principal. So there's not even that.¹⁵⁵

Most teachers lamented the empty staff room: '*You know, you go into the staff room, it's like a morgue*'.¹⁵⁶ Some teachers avoided the staff room in order to avoid the negative feelings, or to avoid the gaze of the principal. But what some teachers missed the most was the sharing of recipes. This signified for them the loss of community and belonging, which had been replaced with a corporate-like environment:

We really perhaps go for days without seeing one another. And that's not fair ... it's where we used to share recipes, and I mean this is a stupid example ... We don't get to see people to share – other than at break – and at break you are so busy doing other things, and meeting pupils ... [CH: *Should recipes be shared at schools?*] The sharing of recipes ... it is social. It built a wonderful sort of belonging among the staff, and that is what's going to be missed. It's like working for a business – you know, I always think of these big accounting firms where you arrive there with your laptops.

¹⁵³ Teacher, 27 March 2003. [Document 70:13 (431:460). Codes: Process - after two years].

¹⁵⁴ Teacher, 23 May 2002. [Document 12:150 (1731:1743). Codes: Impact - the school became unified].

¹⁵⁵ Teacher, 9 January 2003. [Document 52:14 (413:436). Codes: Teachers - relationship with colleagues].

¹⁵⁶ Teacher, 4 November 2002. [Document 19:38 (631:641). Codes: Teachers - socialising with colleagues].

‘Plug in your laptops – sit wherever you like’ – you know these new open-plan offices – and perhaps communicate with a few familiar faces, and go home. And that’s what it’s becoming like, and it’s quite terrifying.¹⁵⁷

As the restructuring evolved the teachers were relieved when parents began to support them:

It took a year, but I think that when the community started getting involved and putting their foot down, I think that’s brilliant. The fact that people have now decided to stand up and take responsibility is, I think, a very important thing ... I’m talking of the teachers and the PTAs Everybody feels they’ve got a common enemy. So everybody’s speaking to each other better, and working well with each other.¹⁵⁸

Yet, after a heated PTA meeting the teachers were again blamed for insubordination and for inciting parents and pupils. It seemed that the CEO was attempting to separate the alliance that had formed between the teachers and the parents:

The next day [the CEO] walked into the staff room with [the vice-chairperson and chairperson]. He was very angry; he was speaking very harshly. He knows that people are talking behind his back – he told the teachers that if they will wash their ‘dirty linen’ outside, and if they badmouth their school, the parents will take their children out of the school and as a result these teachers will be without jobs. He blamed people for telling lies about him and taking his words out of context.¹⁵⁹

Soon after that the CEO sent a questionnaire to all parents asking them to indicate how many extra lessons their child had, who was providing these lessons and how much had been charged.¹⁶⁰ The teachers were up in arms again. The atmosphere was close to a riot. By that time the community leaders realised that the restructuring was running into difficulties and joined forces to rescue the failing process. Different initiatives were taken to patch up the relationships between the CEO, principals and the teachers, and at the same time to silence any opposition. In public addresses to parents, the CEO began to praise teachers’ cooperation and dedication. Yet, as he complimented one faction of the school, he discredited another. His reference to Rabbi Akiva¹⁶¹ indicates a lack of distinction between literality (*peshat*) and interpretation (*midrash*), another characteristic of Ultra Orthodoxy’s approach to Jewish writings:

Please join me in giving tribute to all our headmasters, teachers [parents clapping]. We have to congratulate them. To be a teacher for Jewish children is a nightmare.

¹⁵⁷ Teacher, 4 November 2002. [Document 19:79 (1257:1300). Codes: Teachers - socialising with colleagues].

¹⁵⁸ Manager, 15 October 2002. [Document 39:69 (740:765). Codes: Resistance].

¹⁵⁹ Journal entry. [Document 55:545 (5242:5250). Codes: Teachers - threatened].

¹⁶⁰ Communication from the CEO to all parents, 14 August 2002.

¹⁶¹ There is a Talmudic passage that tells of a plague that killed twenty four thousand disciples of Rabbi Akiva at the first century ce.

While the process is going on it is difficult for top staff. But I must compliment them for not exposing their anxiety to the kids. In other schools it did happen. We must not torment the children and add to their anxiety. My wife told me how nice the children are in Sandton. The children of [the other] KD schools were behaving badly ... It is part of our culture to be nice to other people, to talk nicely ... It is my appeal to children and parents to be nice to each other. Rabbi Akiva – his pupils died because they did not give respect to their teachers.¹⁶²

The teachers accepted the CEO's attempts at making amends with apprehension and relief. Some respondents were happy to give him another chance, while others felt that this was yet another tactic. The following quotation describes the process and teachers' reactions:

Since the challenge of the parent body and the threat of resignations at the King David Linksfield campus, he promised before Elul¹⁶³ that this was a time of repentance, and he apologises and he's going to change his ways. In a number of meetings we've had recently ... he was jovial – he gave in on certain issues very quickly, whilst still holding his own opinion on other issues, and it was a very ... ya, normal discussion as would have happened in previous ... with [the director] – something which hasn't happened in the last year to the extent that he was quite surprised – maybe shocked that he actually had such a good rapport with the teachers. Maybe he's realising that if he actually does speak – and the teachers are very surprised – yet in the back of everybody's mind is the issue of 'Does the leopard change its spots?' Is this just another method being used in order to manipulate the people around him? We don't know ... He's having lunches and giving gifts to all the teachers. And most of the teachers are saying: 'Thank you very much, and wow ...' but the few teachers who I've asked: 'Are you wowed by this and wooed by this?' The answer is no. They are waiting for the next round.¹⁶⁴

Resignation

As the second year of the restructuring was coming to a close, the message to the outside stakeholders was that everyone was happy and communication was good. Teachers were busy changing the look of the school report "to make it look like an OBE report card", even though a few teachers spoke about slight changes in practice as well. The CEO avoided the schools but was meeting regularly with the principals. The lay leaders were satisfied at the pretence of an improved atmosphere, even though one can detect doubts in the next quotation:

But at the moment of the restructuring Phase One has been completed, in other words, [the CEO] is in. He's done what he felt he had to do, and it at least looks financially, much rosier that it did. And I'm told – I don't know how true it is, you will have to ask others – I'm told that the teachers are now much happier – those that are remaining. There was a lot of aggravation – in fact, antipathy. I'm told on all

¹⁶² Journal entry. [Document 55:653 (3662: 3724). Codes: CEO - complimenting stakeholders].

¹⁶³ The last month in the Jewish calendar dedicated to repentance and preparation for the Day of Atonement.

¹⁶⁴ Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:47 (818:856). Codes: CEO - making amends].

sides, not just from [the CEO], from others – there's a much happier relationship with the staff. I hope that's true.¹⁶⁵

Teachers were submitting and adapting. They were demoralised and demotivated but tried not to complain. The next quotation is a heartbreaking statement from a teacher who had resigned herself to be without much worth:

I am a small and insignificant teacher. I am continuing with my work. When I opened my salary slip and saw an increase, I was happy. But even if there was no increase I wouldn't have made any waves, because I am tired.¹⁶⁶

One teacher, who was fighting what she has perceived as an unfair dismissal, was advised by her colleague not to take the CEO on in a fight: *'Try and negotiate ... You don't have to buckle under him, but don't take him on. See what you can negotiate...'*¹⁶⁷ Another teacher expressed feelings of tiredness, disempowerment and submission:

I've always been outspoken in the staff room, and really, I'm tired. I'm weary ... And I'm tired of fighting the fight, because I'm getting nowhere either ... I have to get on with it. And if it reaches a stage that I don't agree with it, then I will take my children out of the school. But if I want a job, let's say... I must be honest – the fight is out of me a little bit. If you would have spoken to me about this 18 months ago, I was fierce. I'm not so fierce any more because I'm fighting a losing battle.¹⁶⁸

So while on the surface the schools were being managed more efficiently, principals and teachers were toeing the line; there was an uneasy feeling in the air, one of distrust and suspicion. The resistance went underground in terms of staff demoralisation, lack of commitment and tiredness, waiting for something to ignite it:

But I am sure something is going to happen. It is like boiling water; eventually the water will burst out of the kettle. People cannot continue like that forever.¹⁶⁹

Impact on parents

The status of the parents within the organisation was a highly contested issue. Are the parents the customers or the owners of the community school? If they are the customers, what rights do they have? If they are owners, should ownership be given to current parents only or should it include past and future parents? Could real representation be achieved? And above all, who is to decide on these issues?

¹⁶⁵ Community leader, 28 January 2003. [Document 60:4 (67:78). Codes: Process - after two years].

¹⁶⁶ Journal entry. [Document 55:553 (5144:5150). Codes: Teachers - salaries].

¹⁶⁷ Teacher, 27 March 2003. [Document 70:29 (746:772). Codes: Teachers - compliance; Teachers - consulting lawyers].

¹⁶⁸ Teacher, 9 January 2003. [Document 53:52 (926:950). Codes: Teachers - compliance].

¹⁶⁹ Journal entry. [Document 55:553 (5144:5150). Codes: Teachers - salaries].

As mentioned before, the notion of decentralisation and the establishment of governing bodies began to occupy the common sense of many parents in South Africa. Following the appointment of the CEO and his strategic utilisation of the discourse of new managerialism, the perception was that the schools were becoming more decentralised, and hence parents could influence their children's education:

It seemed to me that they were giving more authority to the principals, they were also giving budgets. They said they were basically going to treat the schools more as having their own budgets and therefore having more flexibility as to how they managed it ... I felt that as long as the principal was in touch with the PTA and was responsive to the PTA, the PTA could have more influence¹⁷⁰

As the restructuring process evolved, however, it became clear that parents in this changing context were expected to be “the customers”. As customers they could choose the “product”. They could complain if they were not satisfied. But they could not design it or have any ownership of it:

I believe I can't go to Woolworths and tell them how to run their business because I am their customer ... you believe that educators know what they are doing and parents therefore shouldn't get involved unless they can see outright there is a problem ... something happens and your kid hasn't had a Hebrew lesson in three weeks.¹⁷¹

Yet there was a perception that as customers, Jewish parents had very little choice, and thus they became “locked into” the schools and had to accept what was provided for them:

Things have changed now. When we were dealing with Jewish education, originally it was a choice. The choice of the Jewish parent to send his child to a Jewish school. Now there is no choice. In the new South Africa, you have got to send your child to a private school if you want a decent education for them. There is now very little choice.¹⁷²

Another community member disagreed. While he acknowledged that *'the government schools are no longer an option'* he maintained that there are *'commercial schools like Crawford ... they could send their children there [and] would probably get more value for money'*.¹⁷³ He implied that if they did not like the intensification of the Jewish element at the schools, choices still existed – they could leave Jewish education all together.

¹⁷⁰ Honorary officer, 16 July 2002. [Document 26:7 (111:148). Codes: centralisation vs. decentralisation; PTA - role]

¹⁷¹ Teacher, 26 May 2002. [Document 8:64 (1093:1102). Codes: Parents - customers or owners].

¹⁷² Lay leaders, 18 July 2002. [Document 23:40 (556:562). Codes: KD - the only choice].

¹⁷³ Other stakeholder, 26 March 2003. [Document 66:24 (281:294). Codes: KD - the only choice].

The CEO encouraged the notion of parents as customers. As soon as he encountered resistance from the school staff when they refused to provide extra lessons without extra pay, he sought the alliance of the parents as customers, in order to discipline the providers, that is, teachers and principals:

We believe it's urgent that I address the parent body, and because of the attitudes of one or two people in [school] management, which I think are destructive ... and unacceptable, I am going to bring forward those meetings with parents to make clear what we are trying to do and achieve ... Now, I am going to bring forward the parents, and I'm going out to the parents simply to be the judge. I am saying to the parents: 'My dear friends. This is the length of the school day, this is what happens in every government school, this is what happens in other private schools, this is what happens in King David'. I didn't want to do that but I am going to do it. And you will understand that what I am doing is eminently reasonable, I believe. And I will tell the parents – we should be giving extra lessons as part of our fees.¹⁷⁴

A similar attempt to gather parents' support was used when the CEO encountered resistance to his plans to establish a middle school or a new high school in Sandton. In his address to parents in that area he remarked that even though he promised not to initiate any changes (before the Board Conference), the parents (as customers) could demand it:

You have the right to develop Sandton. Maybe we should have first a middle school in Sandton. I promised to cool it – the Board made me promise not to make a decision for the next few months. But the debate must begin. It is your decision – the decision of the parents. If the parents so desire a middle school and a high school, I will assist without damaging other schools.¹⁷⁵

It is evident that the CEO was seeking the support of the parents on selected issues, while on others – such as the *Bat-Mitzvah* ceremony, the cutting of Hebrew lessons, the increased number of Jewish Studies lessons and the closure of the KD Victory Park campus – he just '*went over their heads*'.¹⁷⁶ Eventually, when promises were not fulfilled and when the restructuring began to affect the motivation of the teachers, many parents lost trust in the CEO. They became dissatisfied customers, and resorted to complaining and objecting. While parents' complaints were not a new phenomenon at the Jewish community schools, teachers maintained that the restructuring increased the level of complaints because '*parents know now that they have the right to complain*'.¹⁷⁷ One teacher argued that parents' demands had increased and that these

¹⁷⁴ Recorded consultation with the CEO, May 2001. [Document 20:138 (3751:3858). Codes: CEO - communication with parents].

¹⁷⁵ Journal entry. [Document, 55:694 (4050:4061). Codes: KDS - High school].

¹⁷⁶ Manager, 2 July 2002. [Document 6:56 (832:837). Codes: Parents - customers or owners].

¹⁷⁷ Manager, 14 May 2002. [Document 3:46 (390:391). Codes: Parents - complains].

demands were now coupled with threats. It was perceived that parents, like other stakeholders, were using the CEO's authority to expand their own authority:

Whereas in the past they might have demanded, but it was subtle, now it is very much immediate gratification ... they want to see their problems sorted out almost immediately otherwise they are going to [the CEO].¹⁷⁸

Teachers retaliated by maintaining that the source of the problems lay with the customers since '*parents do not have parenting skills*'.

When the parents began to oppose the CEO and the Board, PTA meetings became a forum for open discussion and debate. The CEO consequently sought to restrict the functions of the PTA to managing only the '*magazine, the library, the tuck shop and uniform shops and major projects to enhance facilities for our pupils*' (fundraising).¹⁷⁹ From the past minutes of the PTA meetings it seems that the PTAs before hardly dealt with anything else but funds, library, gardens, etc. As a matter of fact one chairperson was most upset that she had to spend her chair year fighting the CEO. In her perception she joined the PTA '*to have fun and do fundraising*'. The data suggests that parents were happy with their role as supporters of the schools as long as they were satisfied with what they were getting. The PTAs became a forum for opposition and for the sharing of information between teachers and parents only as a reaction to the incoherent and ruthless restructuring. Eventually the CEO attempted to restrict these meeting. At some schools the attendance of teachers was discouraged. Principals were not allowed to speak to the parents. Use of the schools' communication channels was forbidden and in some cases parents had to photocopy and distribute notices and minutes of meetings by handing out copies at the car parks. There was an attempt to restrict the topics that could be discussed at these meetings. This was also not always adhered to:

The CEO has told certain Chairs that they are not supposed to discuss certain things. I haven't been part of that but our own PTA has not itself censored its activities. We have continued to talk about everything and anything. It may not be having any impact but ...¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸ Teacher, 17 July 2002. [Document 35:51 (1276:1280). Codes: parents - expectations from schools; Stakeholders - using the CEO's authority to improve their own].

¹⁷⁹ Message from CEO. *Davidian Star*, April 2002.

¹⁸⁰ Honorary officer, 16 July 2002. [Document 26:7 (111:148). Codes: PTA - role].

Paradoxically, the notion of the parents as customers, rather than as supporters, negatively affected one parent who had previously undertaken fundraising for the schools:

Towards the beginning of the year – I stopped going to the meetings. I felt the PTA had been relegated to this administrative fundraising body. I didn't believe that's what a PTA was. If you want to fundraise – employ someone – raise funds ... if [the CEO] is going to make the school into a money-making organisation, Pick'n Pay doesn't fundraise to build new buildings. Why must we fundraise to improve the assets of the Board when the Board is not accountable?¹⁸¹

Parents demanded that their voice be heard. One parent argued that since parents are involved in the schools for a period of 15 years (if one includes nursery school) or more (in the case of more than one child), their *'views are deserving of recognition ... not in terms of the day-to-day issues ... but in terms of [broad] policy – what the school should be teaching'*.¹⁸²

There were those stakeholders who did not disagree with having parental input into education, but who could not accept parents' attempts to change the goals and mission of Jewish education. One community leader therefore justified the attempt to silence the parents' voice. In his view the parent body, like a religious congregation, is *'entitled to a say [but] they are not entitled to a veto'*; the same adherence to authority that is required by a religious establishment is applicable to the schools:

There is nowhere in the world where the PTA instructs the headmaster – never mind the executive committees and what have you. The Board just says to the headmaster: *'This is what you are going to do'*.¹⁸³

One honorary officer viewed the parents as a “moving target” while, in his perception, the Board had to remain true to its mission and should not be swayed by the short-term needs of the parents. In this view the schools belong to the past parents who established them, and the executive committee of the Board is the guardian of their trust:

If parents want to run a school, they are quite happy to get together as a band and go and start a school. That's what King David was – a band of parents got together and decided to run a school. If you want to come to our school, these are the parameters. If you don't like the parameters, fine. For instance there's a groundswell to open the schools to non-Jewish pupils. And the criticism is that the Board is not in touch with the new realities in South Africa. We are very much in touch with the new realities in South Africa. That's why we want to keep this ... This was the mission statement of

¹⁸¹ Parent, 14 August 2002. [Document 40:68 (1368:1388). Codes: PTA - role].

¹⁸² Parent, 21 October 2002. [Document 43:10 (291:296). Codes: Parents - customers or owners].

¹⁸³ Community leader, 28 January 2003. [Document 60:7 (120:138). Codes: Parents - customers or owners].

the King David School. If you don't like it – make your own school! You know, these are the ground rules ... Because let's face it – every year another 300 or 400 kids come into the school and you have a new set of parents who have their own agenda. A school shouldn't be run by a short-term agenda of parents who think in terms of their particular children. They have a choice of schools. Make a choice of the school which suits your particular agenda. Don't come to King David and try and change the agenda ... The Board has to remain true to its mission statement, to its ethos ... If we diverge from there, then that is perhaps cause for criticism.¹⁸⁴

The paradox was that the restructuring was a clear attempt to change the mission and goals of the schools and to narrow its parameters. Were the Board to '*remain true to its mission statement*' it would have maintained its "broadly national-traditional" ethos. This rhetoric was, however, used to silence those who resisted the changes; the pretext was the attempt to open the schools to gentile students. Yet these two aspects could be connected: as the schools became more religious, they would become less attractive to liberal thinkers and to gentiles. The phrase "if you don't like it you can leave" signified a complete change in the ethos of the schools from community schools that attempted to provide for diverse ideological, financial and educational needs, to schools with narrower borders that attempted to provide for the desires of those in power, not necessarily for the needs of the majority.

This raises the question of majority and representation. What constitutes the "parents"? What constitutes representation? Are the PTAs representative bodies?

One parent maintained that the PTA is a self-selected, volunteer group. Parents are not democratically elected, but rather join the PTA:

But when I say join that is really what it is, as a volunteer. I mean there is no great competition to being elected, it is just a question of coming along to meetings.¹⁸⁵

For another parent, this was representation because every parent had a democratic right to elect a representative, to be elected or to disagree with the decisions of the PTA. If parents chose not to exercise these rights, that did not make that body less representative. He maintained that even though usual attendance at PTA meetings was very low (between 10–30 parents), major decisions were taken by calling the parents to an open meeting.

Traditionally only a few parents got involved on a regular basis. In many cases it was perceived by some teachers to be for '*their own altruistic ventures, not for*

¹⁸⁴ Lay leader, 13 August 2002. [45:35 (784:828). Codes: Parents - customers or owners].

¹⁸⁵ Honorary officer, 16 July 2002. [Document 26:1 (11:15). Codes: PTA - reason for joining].

anything else'.¹⁸⁶ Parents were largely not involved and only helped when they were asked to do so. One parent observed that with the restructuring parents became either more apathetic or more vociferous, while others lost trust in the system and left the schools in anger.¹⁸⁷ The latter was a small group, as most parents were reluctant to take their children out of the schools.

As already mentioned there were a few initiatives from parents to affect the trajectory of the restructuring. Some initiatives were spontaneous, such as boycotting the new uniform or boycotting the graduation ceremony. However, these actions were not effective in the long run, as there was neither consensus nor an organised centre. In the case of the uniform, for example, once special rates were offered to “early birds”, parents just went ahead and bought them. The Victory Park Primary School was an exception. They had an organised PTA group consisting of many academics and professionals. When the campus was threatened with closure, more people joined the PTA and established the Victory Park Community Action Group. This unified and organised body succeeded in reversing the decision to close the campus. The group, however, dispersed after achieving its main goal. At the Linksfield campus the teachers and parents mandated a parent/lawyer to represent them. He was successful in postponing the decision to establish a middle school and in ensuring a salary increase for the school executives. In the process, however, he became a personal target to the CEO and his supporters. There is evidence to suggest that one community leader warned the members of the Board’s executive committee that this parent was not going to do the cause of Jewish education any good and that they should not have anything to do with him.

Other initiatives, such as the different action committees at the other schools, were less successful. A few reasons were identified for this.

One reason was parents’ general lack of knowledge and understanding of the structures, the power games and the history of the Board and the schools. Moreover, most parents were perceived not to be informed of the restructuring process and what was happening at the schools:

There was a small grouping of parents that were concerned, but the overall grouping of parents just went with the flow. And never mind went with the flow, lots of them

¹⁸⁶ Teacher, 17 July 2002. [Document 35:69 (1822:1853). Codes: PTA - role].

¹⁸⁷ Parent, 27 August 2002. [Document 46:10 (406:426). Codes: Impact - on parents].

didn't even know that there were issues or – you know, parents become complacent and they just go with the flow or it becomes unimportant to them.¹⁸⁸

One respondent perceived the parents as '*gullible*' customers who were easily swayed by the CEO that '*tells them all nice things that they want to hear*'.¹⁸⁹ One manager conceded that only a few parents were aware and understood what was going on, and that that depended mostly on what the principal chose to tell them.

The second reason for the lack of success was the different interests represented in these groups. There was no unity among the parents. Some parents were ready to compromise much more than others. Some wanted strong immediate action, while others wanted to negotiate and send letters:

I didn't think that the issues were as dramatic as they made them out to be. And I also felt that one didn't need to be as aggressive as they wanted to be. I've always believed that the way that you get things done is through negotiation. ... And this group didn't want things to ride. It wanted action 'now, now, now'. And I didn't believe that that was necessarily always the right way to go.¹⁹⁰

One parent who was instrumental in initiating the resistance at the Linksfield High School became disillusioned with the lack of decisive strong action. He retreated from involvement maintaining that '*the community will get what it deserves*'.¹⁹¹ Some parents who realised the strength of the PTA at Victory Park were reluctant to join them because of the liberal views of some of the members and the impression that they wanted to open the schools to gentile students. There was also a division among the Victory Park parents on this issue, as not all parents wanted to open their schools.

The CEO was able to manipulate the different interests to break the momentum of the PTAs or action groups. A participant in one of the action groups described the process as follows:

Mr... approached the group and he said that he wanted to get involved. From the moment he got involved our group went crazy. There were all these different agendas and these different movements – people pulling this way, people pulling that way ... The chairlady... she was frightened and she backed off ... Two fathers were called to a meeting with the CEO. They were satisfied by what had been explained to them at that secret meeting, but they wouldn't exactly divulge what had been explained to them. And they in fact went as our representatives and they were therefore accountable to us and to the rest of the parent body.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁸ Parent, 15 November 2002. [Document 44:4 (205:216). Codes: Parents - apathy].

¹⁸⁹ Honorary officer, 29 July 2002. [Document 47:24 (740:748). Codes: Parents - CEO].

¹⁹⁰ Parent, 15 November 2002. [Document 44:17 (667:693). Codes: Parents - no consensus on action].

¹⁹¹ Journal entry. [Document 55:898 (1413:1419). Codes: Impact - stakeholders start to face reality].

¹⁹² Parent, 14 August 2002. [Document 40:64 (1209:1224). Codes: Parents - no consensus on action].

Another tactic used by the CEO was to pressurise the principals to control the parents. Once parents realised that the principals might lose their jobs if they cooperated with them, they became less militant and quietened their resistance. It therefore seems that community loyalty among stakeholders was manipulated to gain control and to silence dissenting voices.

In some cases the CEO was able to influence the PTA chairperson to work with him rather than against him. Once the chairpersons changed their opinions they took the PTA along with them. In the following citation one can follow the inner struggle of this PTA chairperson and the decision that she eventually made. What is also evident is the confusion (Is what is happening right or wrong?), resignation, as well as the “despondent dependency” and fear of a future without the CEO, which has already been identified in other stakeholders’ perceptions:

I think that there’s been a – in terms of the parent body – there’s been a huge turnaround in the way of thinking. There are people that are very negative about everything that happens. But on the whole I’ve found that there’s a lot more positivity, and that people realise that – yes, he came in to change the financial situation. And yes, maybe he did meddle in educational issues. But perhaps it was justified – no-one’s saying that it was, and no-one’s saying that it wasn’t. But as a whole, the school is working, and as a whole we still have a school to send our children to, which we may not have had if he hadn’t have come in ... But I think that – I also had a lot of change of heart over the year. I was also very political in the first half of the year, and I just sort of came to the realisation that – you know – one has to work with what one’s got, and one has to work with the people that you know ... I suddenly realised that I’m dealing with the type of man that I had dealt with before, with the same kind of personality ... My boss was exactly the same ... And the only way that I have found to deal with those types of people, is to not take everything that they say at face value. To constantly question and ask ... And I just decided that, you know what – if we got rid of him, who would come? And maybe the person that would come would be a hundred times worse.¹⁹³

Another reason for the lack of resistance was disappointment and disillusionment. Parents tried to resist but did not persevere. In some cases parents even stopped coming to PTA meetings when they realised that they were *‘bashing [their] heads against a brick wall, they were not getting anywhere’*.¹⁹⁴ Parents’ attempts to find out facts were dampened. It became such *‘a hassle to find out facts here. Eventually you get weighed down with the effort and leave it’*.¹⁹⁵ At one point the parents even threatened to use the Protection of Information Act, especially in order to have the

¹⁹³ Parent, 15 November 2002. [Document 44:56 (1892:1949). Codes: Parents - resistance - KDLP].

¹⁹⁴ Parent 3 July 2002. [Document, 18:2 (423:428). Codes: Parents - feel helpless].

¹⁹⁵ Parent, 21 October 2002. [43:25 (663:665). Codes: Parents - resistance].

CEO's contract disclosed and to ascertain whether he had the legal power to affect all these changes, but nothing came of it.

Teachers, on the other hand, were not communicating information. They were not even sure whether parents would give it the same meaning as they did:

On the one hand I don't think that the parents are aware of what the change is really about. I am not sure that they really understand ... Does the parent know that his child is learning less Hebrew? I don't think they know that they cut the Hebrew hours, and the implication, and you are not allowed to talk, because if you talk you will be called to a disciplinary hearing. You are not allowed to approach parents, and you are not allowed, as a teacher, to activate the parents ...¹⁹⁶

One manager likewise thought that parents knew very little but '*it was not for [him] to go and tell them*'.¹⁹⁷ One teacher conceded that parents were not aware, but there was '*a professional line*' that did not allow her to expose things '*from the inside*'. Furthermore, she was not sure what she could tell them, as it was more underlying change that was taking place. A conspiracy of silence therefore prevailed:

But you see there's nothing tangible that you can take – in all that we've said now, what can you honestly take and go and discuss, because it hasn't really happened – there are still boys and girls in the choir. You know there – there's still Hebrew – there's still Jewish Studies ... There's nothing clear. There's nothing where you can see where it's going yet. From inside, the feeling is that the Jewish Studies teachers are given more and more, because maybe they are seen in a higher light – I don't know. Does that not make for a more religious environment? I don't know.¹⁹⁸

Parents who were aware of the changed atmosphere became frustrated and helpless.

Without any forum to debate, the feeling was that:

Everything is dead. [The CEO] is trying to weed out those who are in opposition ... People don't care – they do not understand the consequences. People are afraid to complain. If you complain – you are going against the party line and you will be pushed out. They are afraid to be put to shame like [the parent/lawyer] ... Most people want to turn a blind eye; they don't understand what will happen. They are worried about the marks on the report.¹⁹⁹

There was also a feeling that there was no one to turn to. While there were some threats to take the Board to court, parents were reluctant to take this option as '*it might have brought the system into disrepute*' and '*we shouldn't air our dirty*

¹⁹⁶ Manager, 14 May 2002. [Document 3:101 (732:749). Codes: Parents - understanding of the changes].

¹⁹⁷ Manager, 12 July 2002. [Document 24:12 (344:375). Codes: Parents - understanding of the changes].

¹⁹⁸ Teacher, 9 January 2003. [Document 53:38 (873:923). Codes: Parents - understanding of the changes].

¹⁹⁹ Journal entry. [Document 55:389 (860:869). Codes: Parents - resistance].

linen'.²⁰⁰ Parents eventually began to fear that if '*they stand up and they speak out, their children will be victimised*'. But most of all it was perceived that what parents wanted was a school to send their children to and peace of mind. And for that they were ready to compromise:

Because at the end of the day people want to send their children to school. They don't want to be concerned with – well, we live in South Africa – will your husband get into your gate at night? Will you be able to make a living? Are you going to be mugged? There's the rise of the Muslim community. The rise of anti-Semitism. It's got so many other issues and I think that the husbands are working so hard to pay the school fees – that they don't concern themselves with the issues. The wives are concerned with – can I afford the Diesel jeans that my daughter or my son wants? But they don't look at the issues.²⁰¹

By the beginning of 2003, most PTA and AGM meetings were either non-existent or had shrunk to a few individuals (except at Victory Park Primary School). The only PTA meeting at Linksfield Primary School was ended abruptly, as the deputy principal could not bear to face parents' criticism. As a result parents at Linksfield Primary were not informed of their right to choose representatives to the Board conference in March 2003. Those representatives were instead chosen by the CEO. The CEO managed to impose his own choice of representatives in most PTAs. His list usually comprised parents who were seen to comply with his demands and excluded those who resisted him. The only place where proper preparation for the election took place was at Victory Park Primary School, whereby parents carefully choose their representatives. However, a new member joined in and was nominated to become a representative. It was rumoured that he had had some professional dealings with the CEO. Unsurprisingly he was the only member of the Victory Park Primary School group who was elected to become an honorary officer at the Board. From the Victory Park High School a young ex-head boy was chosen as an honorary officer, even though nobody could tell me who nominated him. He happened to be a *Ba'al Teshuva* who had worked with the vice-chairperson on a fundraising activity.

The unintended positive consequence of the restructuring was that some parents became involved and motivated to understand and learn about the structure of the schools and their core issues. When they saw that they might lose the schools, they began to care. Parents who usually avoided PTA meetings because '*there's such*

²⁰⁰ Parent, 31 January 2003. [Document 63:20 (412:433). Codes: PTA - hiring lawyer].

²⁰¹ Parent, 14 August 2002. [Document 40:74 (1499:1518). Codes: Parents - apathy].

a pettiness about it’ were interested in joining in when there were *‘real, important issues’*.²⁰²

Another positive consequence was the community spirit that permeated the Victory Park campus and the feeling of togetherness that engulfed the teachers, pupils, parents and the broader community. This feeling was expressed by the PTA chairperson as he described their struggle to preserve the campus: *‘It was the best of times, it was the worst of times’*. The forces that attempted to divide the community therefore produced a counterforce of unity.

Vignette 2 follows the middle school policy that demonstrates the autocratic and incoherent mode of change which transformed the initial consent to the restructuring into open resistance. It describes the middle school policy that almost achieved the goal of dividing the school community, including breaking up the relatively strong unity among the executives at Linksfield High School. At the same time it had unintended consequences as it prompted selected parents from all the schools to join together, to create channels of communication, to petition other parents and to lobby the community leaders as well as the Board members. It was this unity that eventually resulted in the CEO’s departure.

Vignette 2 - The middle school

Towards the end of the second term in June 2002, unknown to principals, teachers and parents, a decision was taken to divide the Linksfield campus into four units: a junior primary school - Grades 1-3, which was always operated as a separate unit; a senior primary school - grades 4-6; a middle school - grades 7-9; and a senior high school - grades 10-12. This meant that the present primary school would lose its Grade 7, which would form the middle school together with grades 8 and 9 from the high school. Each school would have its own classrooms and administration, as well as its own principal. The new school would begin functioning in January 2003 on the premises of the old hostel at the high school, and would therefore form a separate enclave within the high school. Parents were advised that the Board had already instructed architects to assist them in improving the physical amenities on the campus.²⁰³

The decision was justified by global and local changes, such as the existence of a worldwide trend towards middle schools; changes in the South African educational system with the introduction of public examinations at the end of Grade 9; the better personal attention that

²⁰² Parent, 31 January 2003. [Document 63:41 (972:979). Codes: PTA - reason for joining].

²⁰³ Undated letter from the CEO to parents, titled: Restructuring King David Schools.

could be provided in smaller schools; and by the perception that *Grade 7* pupils fit more easily into a middle school than a primary school.

While the establishment of a middle school was presented as an educational initiative that would bring the schools on par with global and local trends, it was not perceived as such. The haste by which the middle school was expected to be established (five months) coupled with the fact that it had not been discussed with the teachers or the principals, pointed towards political expediency rather than educational considerations. However, this policy had unintended consequences as it mobilised the parents to start an open and organised resistance to the CEO. After a stormy PTA meeting at KDLH on 18 June 2002, a committee was mandated to seek a legal opinion on the constitution of the Board and the legality of the CEO's mandate. Consequently, the CEO withdrew his plans and announced that he would institute a proper consultative process in order to decide whether a middle school should be implemented. He recommended that the honorary officers of the Board and the parents surf the Internet for information on middle schools. He claimed to have *'discovered 4,000 sites worldwide'*.²⁰⁴ While there was some kind of consultative process, the general perception was that a middle school would be established with or without stakeholders' consent:

And he's sort of - the middle school, he's stepped back a bit. It will happen, but hopefully it will happen with consultation and it will take a form that suits the school. Not a form that you read about on the 'net'.²⁰⁵

And indeed a year later, in June 2003, a decision was taken to introduce middle schools at both the Victory Park and Linksfield campuses.

The question on many stakeholders' minds was: *Why? Why would the CEO decide to invest in building new structures and employing new managers when the Board still owed about R20 million? Why would a system with dilapidated buildings and dwindling pupil numbers invest in new structures instead of fixing the old ones? Why would a system that had retrenched teachers, remedial therapists and social workers, embark on a new venture that focused on the emotional and individualised needs of teenagers? Why would a system that advocates uniformity and a standardised curriculum, recommend a creative and integrated curriculum which is the essence of a middle school?*

The evidence presents several options to understand this decision, which again illustrate the interplay between the ideological, political and economic imperatives of the restructuring.

In economic/managerial thinking, small cost centres are better controlled. Smaller units would require fewer vice-principals and consequently a reduced salary bill. At the same time, the CEO maintained that the middle schools could be implemented with minimal investments:

²⁰⁴ Letter to all members of the executives committee of the SABJE, 24 July 2002. Letter to parents, 20 January 2003.

²⁰⁵ Teacher, 4 November 2002. [Document 19:21 (451:464). Codes: Middle school].

In view of the fact that all our schools peaked at higher student numbers than at present, we believe that the middle schools can be accommodated at all our campuses if necessary with little further development. There will be a need for more toilet facilities and specialised teaching facilities, such as labs.²⁰⁶

This statement indicates limited understanding of the process of educational change and of its hunger for resources. It could also mean that the intention was to have a minor structural change (adding some toilets) without investing in developing new concepts of teaching and learning. Thus, while there could be benefits from the reduced number of vice-principals, no major investment was envisaged for the new venture.

Politically, the evidence suggests that the reason for the middle school was to break the power and the unity of the executives at Linksfield High who consistently and openly resisted the CEO's policies. There is evidence to suggest that the honorary officers of the Board approved the decision to establish a middle school at an executive committee meeting held in May 2002, where the discussion was mainly around the resistance of the high school executives and the insinuation that they incited their pupils to vote against the new uniforms. At that executive committee meeting, in between the discussions about the uniform and the insubordination of the KDLH executives, the middle school idea was mentioned. It was envisaged that the middle school would be a "positive step" towards breaking up the power of the executives. In this way the middle school, the uniform and the power of the executives were interwoven into one issue.

There was a perception that the middle school was a pretext to change the people in power. By creating new structures teachers and principals would have to reapply for new positions. Consequently, the CEO could replace the old management with his own people:

Many people see it as a way of dividing and ruling. To create two positions. Two headmasters - one will be an appointee of your own ... Political, and controlling. I'm not convinced for one minute that it will be for the betterment of the school and the kids. He talks about it being more personal, and the children's needs would be catered for more ... I don't believe it ...²⁰⁷

This perception proved to be accurate when a year later the CEO sent a memo to all members of staff *'to apply for the principals' positions at primary, middle and high school level'*²⁰⁸ at both Linksfield and Victory Park, despite the fact that these positions were not vacant.

The CEO continued to insist that the middle school was a purely educational decision. One of the main arguments was that "smaller schools are better". However, the notion of a small school stood in contradiction to the discussions held concurrently on the closure of the Victory Park campus, which had about 900 pupils at that time.

And then [the CEO] adds afterwards that he's done a lot of reading on the subject and he's realised that the ideal size of a school is 126. Where he got that figure from, I'm not

²⁰⁶ A letter from the CEO to Grade 6 and 7 parents, 3 June 2003.

²⁰⁷ Other stakeholder, 12 July 2002. [Document 24:33 (712:732). Codes: Middle school; Divide and rule].

²⁰⁸ Memo from the CEO to all members of staff, 25 June 2003.

sure, but that's what he said. I couldn't listen to this nonsense. They were postponing discussion that night on the whole future of Victory Park, because they were so pre-occupied with this one. And the very reason for Victory Park's closure, was that it was too small and no longer viable.²⁰⁹

Paradoxically, a year later it was decided to establish a middle school at Victory Park despite the fact that it had become even smaller after rumours of its closure had spread. For some respondents this was perceived as another tactic to force the eventual closure of the Victory Park campus.

There was another perception that ideological considerations had influenced the decision to establish a middle school. There was the view that the CEO was trying to follow the trend of religious schools to place girls over *Bat-Mitzvah* age (12) and boys over *Bar-Mitzvah* age (13) in high school. Some stakeholders spoke about this "hidden agenda":

But some of them were saying this morning - we wonder what the hidden agenda is of splitting the school? Now why should they even think of a 'hidden agenda' if they aren't suspicious because of so many other things that happened? So what's the 'hidden agenda'? In their view - that it will be a boys' school and a girls' school. I don't believe it. As disinterested as the parents may or may not be, they are not going to allow that to happen. It's not what the KD schools are meant to be.²¹⁰

With the lack of clear understanding about the meaning of the policy, the stakeholders reacted to the decision to establish a middle school with the usual ambivalence. Some perceived it as another impulsive decision that was meant to exert greater control on the system, while others perceived it as an educational improvement. Others maintained that the decision did not take the whole school system into consideration and that the unintended consequences that a change in one campus would have on the other campuses had not been explored. The following citations illustrate some of the perceptions:

It is a case of as you settle down and think everything is OK he rocks the boat. I said to somebody 'Where did he get this from, to suddenly throw it out overnight, the middle school'.²¹¹

He is a control freak. He does not want one person to have all the power. He will separate so he can control.²¹²

He only wants to put the middle school in Linksfield. I mean the man doesn't think straight ... now you've got Sandton, which is feeding Linksfield and feeding Victory Park. So what do the Sandton parents do? Do they take their child out in Grade 6 in order to join the middle school.²¹³

One teacher saw the establishment of a middle school as a positive step. In the following extract it is evident that she accepted the rhetoric without any critical understanding of the change, even

²⁰⁹ Other stakeholder, 8 October 2002. [Document 34:7 (190:299). Codes: CEO - Middle school].

²¹⁰ Other stakeholder, 15 July 2002. [Document 25:48 (1163:1175). Codes: Middle school].

²¹¹ Manager, 1 July 2002. [Document 36:26 (1118:1121). Codes: Middle school].

²¹² Manager, 26 May 2002. [Document 11:66 (589:601). Codes: Middle school; Process - divide and rule].

²¹³ Honorary officer, 29 July 2002. [Document 47:8 (382:399). Codes: Middle school].

if it meant denying her own experience and knowledge. It shows again the impact of the CEO's charisma on some stakeholders:

Here is another positive he is doing, he is dividing up the school, 450 children in a unit, which is what they are doing elsewhere in the world. [CH: *Where?*] The whole world. First of all they have done it in Israel... OK, here you can't [in Israel it did not succeed]. I mean that primary school [Linksfeld] is out of hand, out of hand, so to me that is brilliant, brilliant. Why wasn't it done before? It seemed to be that they were like this for 20 years, the Board, even though people were being sent to Israel, this and that, but the actual structure of the school was like that. Didn't move, even with all the people who were becoming the heads of this and that, it didn't move. And I am not talking about your department, no, that was a big change and I feel that the pre-school change - but in terms of even the uniforms and the system, I mean I was horrified when I taught at ... really I wasn't impressed at all.²¹⁴

Not wanting to be seen as rejecting a policy that claimed to improve the educational provision of the school, the teachers began to debate the issue. The primary schools teachers viewed it as a generally positive change, while the high school teachers resisted it:

And then, of course, there's the talk about the middle school. Look, educationally I suppose it does make sense ... But my argument is that we've never had a middle school - there's never been a middle school necessary - there's always been a system at King David Linksfeld which has worked, where one of the deputy principals ... was in charge of the lower forms ... So there was a middle school in operation, but it operated as one school. Why go and break a winning formula?²¹⁵

We all broke into groups to discuss a rationale - the pros and the cons of a junior high school and a senior high school on the Linksfeld complex. I think the consensus was ... that we need a lot more information. We need to see the research. It's not a Mickey Mouse business. It's a serious educational, sociological, psychological - we are moving kids ... there will be implications, but we shouldn't just reject out of hand - and you need time to do these things. Why does it have to be [quick] - next year, when nobody knows anything? ... How will it fit into the setup? ... My sense of it is that he will defer it. But I'm not sure it's entirely such a bad idea ... let's face it. If you've got 1,000 kids in this school - unless the kid is a problem or an outstanding student, he/she can go right through and I won't even know that child ... There are pros to it. Again, I think it's just the way - they've gone out quickly into print and shooting from the hip. It doesn't mean that the idea is a bad idea - it just needs to be done properly.²¹⁶

But then I'm all for a middle school, so I think it's fantastic ... I think that kids - adolescent children - need special handling and they need special teachers who like that age group ... The only thing I don't think is good, is that they are on the same campus as the rest of the school ... I'm all for a middle school, but not thrown at you to say: 'You'll have a middle school next year'.²¹⁷

The primary school teachers began to prepare the pupils for the middle school by making Grade 6 the graduation year, even though no formal decision was taken and parents were not aware that this was happening. At the same time the teachers were also preparing themselves for the change,

²¹⁴ Manager, 25 June 2002. [Document 17:44 (1044:1062). Codes: Middle school; Stakeholders - buying the discourse].

²¹⁵ Manager, 12 July 2002. [Document 24:11 (320:343). Codes: Middle school].

²¹⁶ Other stakeholder, 15 July 2002. [Document 25:45 (1007:1097). Codes: Middle school].

²¹⁷ Teacher, 24 October 2002. [Document 49:10 (389:438). Codes: Middle school].

even though it was not clear who would teach at the middle school. In one school, teachers were asked to volunteer for the middle school. When none did they were told that it would be their fault if certain teachers lost their jobs. Moreover, no professional development took place and no information was available to the teachers about the nature of the new school. Again, tensions and divisions permeated the schools:

... the Grade 6s in particular are very upset that they are not going to be the leaders of the school but we are trying to make their last five months in primary school - we want to put on a little Grade 6 play and we want to do a barn dance for them and we want to make them monitors ... We are waiting to be told which of the Grade 7 teachers are going up, which of us choose then to leave because some of them have said they are not going up and they will then leave. But then that is fine because they have basically been negative people all along ... We are waiting to see. I see it as a challenge. I see it as something exciting, maybe different staff members to work with, new ideas, you know because a lot of your colleagues become resentful if you have got ideas for them ... ²¹⁸

When the parents began to hear about the middle school, they were confused. Those parents whose children had passed that age group were relieved that it would not affect them. They did not know if it was a good idea or a bad idea. In fact they had no idea what a middle school was, and they did not trust the CEO to decide for them:

I've got an open mind to the middle school ... but he hasn't convinced me by his single letter ... because at the back of my mind, I don't trust him. And that I think is what the issue boils down to - is you can't accept any change he introduces, because you don't trust him. ²¹⁹

Unable to deal with the bigger issues or to defer the decision, some parents just wanted to buy enough time to prepare their children for the change:

But as I say, you know, listen, it's not that we disagree with the middle school. What we disagree with is it being in five months' time. You've also got to sell it to parents. You can't ask parents to buy into something that they have no knowledge of ... I do believe that the middle school will happen in the year 2004, but hopefully in the next year we will have sufficient time to prepare the children accordingly. We know - I mean in our minds - I mean he hasn't told us in so many words it's going to happen - but you speak to any senior teacher in the school, they all say: 'Ya, 2004'. ²²⁰

As debate regarding the middle school continued, suspicion and divisions between stakeholders intensified. Everyone was suspecting the other of having a hidden agenda:

You see [the principal of the high school] ... was very scared that in the middle school situation he wasn't the headmaster. It was a very personal thing ... for him because (a) he didn't think it would work physically and (b) for him to be a principal of three grades or whatever it was ... his own insecurities, because he is on a limited time span. We got to realise that there are no guarantees on where he is going to be and umm he's reached retirement age and you've got to understand that and so has [another principal] reached retirement age, they have all reached retirement age. ²²¹

²¹⁸ Manager, 17 July 2002. [Document 35:40 (959:1002). Codes: Middle school].

²¹⁹ Parent, 14 August 2002. [Document 40:81 (1687:1701). Codes: Middle school].

²²⁰ Parent, 15 November 2002. [Document 44:63 (2223:2293). Codes: Middle school].

²²¹ Lay leader, 07 March 2003. [Document, 65:21 (785:798). Codes: Middle school].

We believe that [the primary school teachers] are being selfish. We believe they just want to get rid of their problem kids - because they become a little bit difficult. And they say to themselves - 'What do we need it for?' And we don't believe they are looking out - caring for the kids, and the future of their kids.²²²

Hargreaves (2003) maintains that exclusion of people from participation and decision-making produces a "community of suspicious minds". This narrative reveals that the level of distrust at that stage was so high that any suggestion by the CEO would be considered with suspicion. The debate around the middle school had exacerbated the divisions between and within stakeholder groups, such as the division between:

- primary school teachers who tended to support the change and high school teachers who tended to oppose it;
- teachers at the same school who were excited about new challenges and new opportunities, and those who were concerned about their jobs and were tired after two years of unending change;
- principals that complied and principals that resisted the new policy;
- school executives who were hoping to become principals of the middle schools and between those who felt that they might lose their positions, or would not be able to continue to work under those conditions much longer;
- those parents who put their trust in the CEO, those who had lost confidence in the process and those who were too apathetic to get involved; and
- what people think, say and do.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, the CEO was obliged to defer the idea of a middle school until after the Board conference (March 2003). Soon after, an impression of consultation was given when each principal was allowed 10 minutes to explain to the newly elected honorary officers of the Board their position with regard to the middle school. The principals were not allowed to discuss the notion among themselves or to publicise it. The Board agreed in principle to implement a middle school but requested additional information. The CEO notified the parents that a middle school would be implemented at Victory Park and Linksfield in 2004.²²³ Most parents were expecting open debate and consultation and were therefore taken aback by the decision. As I had already concluded the fieldwork for the research, I was able to publish, together with one of my supervisors, an article in the Jewish community newspaper reflecting our attitude towards the implementation of the middle school and towards the other top-down managerial decisions that had impacted negatively on teachers' morale and motivation.²²⁴ It was the first time that an

²²² Manager, 17 March 2003. [Document 69:22 (569:652). Codes: Middle school].

²²³ Memo to all members of staff, 25 June 1003.

²²⁴ Focus on a King David 'middle school'. *SA Jewish Report*, 13–20 June 2003.

article criticising the schools was published in the newspaper since the onset of the restructuring - a topic that I will discuss again in Chapter 7.

In August 2003 we (my supervisor and I) were invited by the PTAs of both the Victory Park and Linksfield high schools to address the parents. In spite of the CEO's attempts to declare these meetings illegal and to threaten the principals and chairpersons with insubordination, both meetings took place with a crowd of about 300 and 500 parents respectively (some parents attended both meetings). The Jewish community newspaper published the proceedings of the meetings, at which was discussed the notion of a middle school and the way its implementation was envisaged. Above all we discussed the divisions and the suspicions that permeated the community and called on the different schools to act together:

The resolution of the meeting saw the appointment of a task action committee representative of parents from the schools, that would investigate the issue further and if necessary ... take legal action against the Board.²²⁵

A short period followed in which strong statements and open debate appeared in the newspaper, both for and against the restructuring. This brought the tensions at the KD schools out into the open and allowed them to be publicly scrutinised. After the organised and strategic lobbying of the newly established United King David Action Group (UKDAG), the Board suspended the CEO. No explanation or details were given. However, some of the tensions and divisions remained. The following extracts from stakeholders' letters published in the newspaper exemplify the differing views:

We feel outraged that a man of [the CEO's] calibre is judged by inept, inadequate people who feel threatened by a superior mind ... The Second Temple was destroyed by *Sin'at Chinam* (groundless hatred), let us not do the same to our community.²²⁶

As we approach the apex of the '[CEO] crisis' one cannot help wondering if history is not repeating itself with the same inevitable outcome ... What we appear to have now, then, is a scenario in which the very body which captained the ship as it sank into undeniable financial crisis and then took the unilateral decision to remedy its own mistakes, is once again acting to remedy its second mistake in the very manner in which it attempted to remedy its first: in secrecy and without the informed, express consent of the broader parent body and community.²²⁷

This vignette demonstrates what research had proved again and again: that imposed change is limited and that coerciveness might eventually generate a counterforce strong enough to stop it. The above quotations are, however, critical as they highlight two important aspects: first, the CEO did not control the school community only by coercion but also by consent; and second, the CEO was brought in and was supported by certain forces in the community for various reasons. Chapter 7 will elaborate on these issues.

²²⁵ King David: Discontent boils over. *SA Jewish Report*, 1–8 August 2003.

²²⁶ Zulberg judged by 'inept' people. *SA Jewish Report*, 26 September–3 October 2003.

²²⁷ Is history repeating itself? *SA Jewish Report*, 26 September–3 October 2003.

Chapter 6 described the process by which an attempt was made to change the King David schools into a “McDavid”-type school. At the McDavid schools, efficiency gains would be achieved by requiring the teachers to work “more for less”, by dividing the schools into smaller cost centres, by shifting some of the costs to the parents, and by narrowing and standardising the educational provisions as well as the community services provided by the schools. The evidence shows that the budget cuts served the political and ideological drives of the restructuring, as they changed the power relations within the institution and privileged those who complied with and supported the new regime. In some cases the efficiency gains were not sustainable, and the schools reverted back to their old habits almost immediately.

Decentralisation and centralisation took place simultaneously. While policies were made at the centre, implementation was decentralised. The educational functions of the organisation were decentralised, while finance and religion were centralised; this was in line with both facets of the restructuring – the economic and the ideological. The implementation process depended on the context of the individual school and the agency of principals, teachers and parents. The rhetoric of decentralisation was used to change those in power and to distance the CEO from unpopular decisions, yet true devolution of power to parents and schools was rejected as it negated the religious facet of the restructuring. In contrast, the managerial demand for a clear mission and goals created synergy with the ideological facet of the restructuring. In the process, the “vague and broad” constitutive elements of the community schools were replaced with “clear and narrow” definitions, which attempted to redefine the Jewish identity of the schools and to exclude those who did not adhere to them. The managerial restructuring was therefore effective at giving religion the upper hand in its historical clash with democracy, as well as with secular Zionism. The managerial logic of parents as customers negated their democratic right to become partners and stakeholders in the education of their children. At the same time it increased their “right to complain”. The demand for teachers’ accountability was perceived as another control mechanism, which negated the community loyalty and the personal trust among the school community.

This raised the central question that was at the back of my mind throughout the research: Could the restructuring of the Jewish community schools be explained in terms of new managerialism?

In Chapter 2 a distinction was made – based on the conceptual framework of Wallace and Pocklington (2002) – between neo-Taylorism, entrepreneurship and cultural management. The differentiation was based on the mechanisms by which control over others' agency was achieved. In neo-Taylorism, loosely termed “old managerialism”, power is concentrated at the top and control is contingent on compliance. The school staff and managers must comply regardless of their own values and practices, or face disciplinary measures. Entrepreneurship uses covert and indirect control offered by the market. It emphasises decentralisation, choice, competition and responsiveness to consumers. Compliance is achieved through adherence to consumer demands. Cultural management – that is “new managerialism” – controls stakeholders by aligning the beliefs and values of the manager with those who are managed. Compliance is achieved through commitment to the creation of a shared vision and by winning both the “hearts and minds” of those who are managed. The Foucauldian's concept of *governmentality* was forwarded to explain new managerialism's attempt to achieve cultural hegemony not by domination alone, but also by self-governance. It was argued that these three ideal types might operate together when policy makers seek to maximise their degree of control.

In the restructuring of the Jewish community schools control was envisaged to be achieved by crude neo-Taylorism, while the rhetoric of entrepreneurship and new managerialism was used in order to draw support for the process. Selected practices within the new managerialism discourse were adopted and adapted as long as they coincided with the ideological restructuring and the cost saving goals. This created tensions, contradictions as well as polarisation and suspicion within the community. Yet, it is evident that the allure of the managerial rhetoric of order, certainty, efficiency and rationality could not be turned down by an organisation in a financial crisis and by a community without financial resources or adequate leadership. The economic/managerial turnaround was vital for the survival of the community schools. However, the implementation of these managerial precepts undermined the ethos and mission of the schools. The rhetoric of decentralisation and “parents as customers” were used only to the extent that it could be manipulated to achieve the goals of those

in power. This ambivalence created resistance, as parents' rights were given in one hand only to be taken away by the other. Accountability was perceived as a means to control teachers' labour while precluding management accountability.

The setting of clear goals forms the basis for both corporatism and religion. However, the means to achieve them differ. In a restructuring drive which aimed to shift the schools towards a narrow interpretation of the Jewish religion, there was no need for the managerial notion of captivating the "hearts and minds" of stakeholders. Religious leaders are inherently autocrats who expect obedient and disciplined believers. Adherence was predicated on the Jewish concept of *na'aseh v'nishma* (first we will do and then we will listen), which means that imposed change is in synergy with the fundamentals of the Jewish religion, whereby visible external changes in behaviour indicate the intention to commit to further learning and religiosity. Yet this unquestioning obedience is based on mutual agreement, on belief system and on the relationships of trust and care. Those cannot be imposed. Once trust was absent, resistance was bound to happen, as the vignette of the middle school policy clearly demonstrated. The narrative suggests that it is the lack of coherence between the rhetoric of new managerialism and the practice of old managerialism, which created the counterforce to the restructuring of the Jewish community schools.