

**Values, Perspectives and Agendas of
Parent Advisory Council Presidents**

by

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative, multi-site case study was conducted in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. Individual in-depth interviews were conducted with ten Parent Advisory Council presidents to discover contemporary parents' values, perspectives and agendas regarding public education and parental involvement in educational governance. Furthermore, these presidents were proportionately representative of School District #61 (Greater Victoria)'s Funded Inner City Elementary Schools, and Non-Funded Elementary schools to investigate possible similarities and differences between the groups. To enrich the findings from the individual interviews, each group was interviewed to allow participants to meet their peers, exchange their views and determine whether initial findings were repeated in a group context.

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CHAPTER ONE: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

There is a crack in everything.

That's how the light gets in.

Leonard Cohen, 20th c.

Context

At the dawn of this new millennium it seems appropriate to revisit the cornerstones of public education, check their current strength, and examine the values behind the ongoing wave of innovations. Admittedly, such an undertaking is a challenge as the noted administrative philosopher Hodgkinson (2000) recently put it, "We are always creatures of our times and the times themselves are a flood of events that are always somehow out of focus" (pp.1-2). Yet, to successfully administer the complexities of change forces as we go forward into the future, it is essential to develop an understanding beyond the technical, practical aspects of educational administration. Those groups and individuals who hope to do well by both students and our larger society need to look at the legacy of the past, and determine both the underlying *raison d'etre*, the values, which once motivated the creation of a universal public education system, and those which influence new directions in legislation, policy and practice. The question may be whether these originating values are extant or have they been submerged and/or replaced by others?

In order to analyse the ever-shifting present, scholars have set education onto a continuum which captures the major influences and trends of at least the past three decades. As early as 1982, the futurist Naisbitt (1982) predicted "more political activism at the state and local level in education issues" (p.114). Increasing pressure for change and for a voice by stakeholder groups has had one of the biggest impacts on the education system. This educational reform movement in the Western world has been a natural outgrowth of the eighties and nineties megatrends which included the move from an industrial society toward an information society, from centralisation to decentralisation, and from representative democracy toward participatory democracy. Naisbitt, often criticized at the time, also predicted the move from communication

and control in hierarchies toward networking, from consideration of 'either/or' toward a 'multiple option' range of choices, the privatization of the welfare state, the rise of the Pacific Rim, and the flourishing of global lifestyles and cultural nationalism.

According to Australian researchers Caldwell and Spinks (1992), the effects of these megatrends on the field of education "are evident, especially in regard to trends to an information society, decentralisation, self-help, participatory democracy, networking and multiple options" (p.6). Largely in response to these movements, a few key developments within education have been an unparalleled concern for the provision of quality education for each individual; the expansion of basic education to include problem-solving, creativity and a capacity for life-long learning and re-learning; a move to disperse education to the home or workplace through the use of computer technologies; the increasing importance of national and global considerations, especially in respect to curriculum and responsiveness of the education system to national needs within a global economy; and an increased emphasis on central authorities to formulate goals, set priorities, and build frameworks for accountability (Caldwell & Spinks). However, one of the most significant trends, and one that has given rise to this study, is the move toward democratization of school governance. In Canada, where education is a provincial matter, this latter trend has been evident over the past decade or more by the move of many provinces to legislate the increased involvement of parents within educational governance. This appearance of decentralization of decision-making to the local school community, and parents' invitation to participate as outlined within new legislative frameworks could be considered by some stakeholders to be a political ploy meant to placate pressure groups.

Although many Western countries have legislated increased parental participation in educational governance, either directly as part of local schools' governing bodies with decision-making power, or indirectly as advisory parent councils to their local schools, it is important for those responsible for ensuring the principles of universality and equity within public education to examine the agendas of the advocates behind this movement (Saul, 1996; Smyth, 1993). In particular, as parents are the subject of this legislation a clearer understanding of parents' values, perspectives and agendas would be a worthwhile endeavour. A review of the professional literature reveals that few academics, practitioners, or government officials have considered

what parents may want to achieve by their participation in school affairs and school governance.

In many provinces Canadian parents have had their voices legitimized through provincial government statutes but whether this legislation reflects parents' desires is unknown. When one considers the diversity of today's parents, it may be that some are interested in certain selected issues, or it may emerge that the majority of parents share similar interests, concerns and values. This knowledge deficiency warrants research to discover whether there are underlying commonalities or very diverse views among parents regarding their role in contemporary educational governance. If governments continue to pursue this course of legislating increased involvement of parents without pausing to evaluate the pro's and con's, the long-term consequences may be adverse to our children. The time has arrived for this assessment as it is our children, and eventually our larger society that will be affected.

Parental Involvement in Educational Governance

Over the last three decades there has been an international reform movement in Western countries to democratize education and other social institutions by moving decision-making power to the local level. (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992; Caldwell, 1997). Reforms in educational governance in countries such as Australia, Israel and England have encouraged parents to become more involved in school-decision making (Goldring & Shapira, 1993; Smyth, 1993). Similar reforms in Canada have been more conservative and limited in nature. Specifically, parents have only been granted advisory capacity which may or may not be accepted by educators and administration, except in Quebec where parents are directly involved with decision-making at the local school level (Martin, 1991).

Less advertised are the voices of international critics who claim that decentralization, in reality, centralizes control to a smaller governing body as it retains control of policy and budget (Angus, 1993). Thus, devolution to site-based management models, with increased involvement of parents and others at the community level, can represent both the devolution of governmental responsibility for the quality and universality of public education, and the facilitation of the transformation to a marketplace approach to education as local governance members attempt to

maintain educational standards with increasingly limited resources. This trend may then constitute a shift from a publically funded, quality, universal educational system founded on liberal democratic principles, to the creation of a multi-tiered educational system. (Clarke, 1997; Saul, 1995) Caldwell & Spinks (1988) acknowledged the perspectives regarding the case for self-management at the local school level, drawn from economics, politics and organization theory, were pervaded by public and private values “with current interest explained in large measure by the ascendancy of certain of these values” (p.6). A closer examination of the values driving these changes is indicated if a better understanding of the forces and interests fuelling educational reforms is to be reached. After such an undertaking, an assessment whether changes are in keeping with stakeholders' values can be made.

Politicians, legislators and educators must carefully weigh both the potential benefits and risks to proposed legislation and policies, and to provide for future evaluation to ensure policies-in-practice are working for the public good (Clarke, 1997; Downey, 1988). For a new policy to be effective, those stakeholders most closely affected by new legislation and policies should be consulted, in order to ensure new directions have taken into account their perspectives, and incorporates their values. Fullan (1991) stated, “Even good ideas may represent poor investments on a large scale if the ideas have not been well developed or if the resources to support implementation are unavailable” (p.28). Only if parents interested in involvement in educational governance are consulted regarding their views and values, can it be determined if these new policies answer parents' and the education systems' needs. Reform efforts are admirable only if they are in keeping with our basic value systems.

Purpose of Study

The primary purpose of this exploratory, qualitative study was to explore parents' perspectives, and underlying values with regards to public education. A secondary purpose was to identify parents' agendas, or what they anticipate accomplishing by becoming active in school governance, and what impact members of Parent Advisory Council's (PAC's) perceived they had with respect to what happens in their local school. Another purpose was to determine why

some parents have been involved for extended periods of time in school governance. A further purpose was to propose recommendations which will be helpful to the various parties involved in forming partnerships with parents in the area of educational governance.

Significance

Set within the context of global socio-economic restructuring, the move toward citizen's demands for participatory democracy, and the movement to reform education, the answers derived from this qualitative investigation may be of social, political, and academic significance. If the involvement of parents, the new partner in the educational enterprise, is to have value, it must be perceived that their efforts have been given due consideration. Consequently, parents' work must be recognized as a purposeful, significant activity by the traditional actors in educational governance. Contemporary parents are better educated, politically savvy and more demanding. They will not be satisfied with a muffled voice.

The interplay that exists within a school, as well as the community at large, may generate different conditions among schools; this is a reality which must be acknowledged. Since there are many parents involved in what happens in a school, there will be numerous agendas based on competing values. Many different perceptions will exist among these parents regarding the impact they may have on teaching, personnel matters, activities, administrative issues, and allocation of resources. Similarly, there will be commonalities. Acting as a link to general society, the values and perspectives of parents involved in Parent Advisory Councils will be mirrored to varying degrees in the school community. As our knowledge of PAC's in general is limited, this study reduces some of the existing deficiencies, and may improve their general effectiveness and efficiency. The outcomes of this enquiry provides useful insights to how PAC's actually function. Further, this research discovered whether parents' values, perspectives, and agendas were adequately acknowledged and addressed by members of the local educational community. This information is very useful to the professionals within the sphere of public education who work with parents in a variety of ways- within PAC's, in the schools and in external school activities.

Traditionally, governance, management and administration of a school was the responsibility of the government, trustees, principals and other professional educators; external influences such as parents and community members existed but were limited, often to the point of 'lip service'. The recent involvement of parents in these areas through progressive legislation, and the attendant social, economic and political perspectives, are bound to have interesting and unexpected consequences. Since the 1871 Comprehensive School Bill mandated education as a provincial responsibility, the principal of universal, quality education has characterized the Canadian public education system. The findings generated by this study explored whether historical Canadian support for universal public education still exists. In-depth analysis of this research clarified some of the values which lie behind parents' agendas. This endeavour partially reduced the knowledge deficiency by clarifying what parents want to see in terms of policy directions, and parents' inclusion in governance issues.

Socially, this research may be significant since public education shapes our society, our opportunities, and, ultimately, the overall health of Canadian society. The agendas of specific interest groups in the educational community need to be examined and better understood in order to achieve a balance that addresses the best long term interests of children and the future welfare of our society. As new partners in school affairs and school governance, the agendas and perspectives of members of Parent Advisory Councils should be identified, and given due consideration by professional educators. More specifically, if schools become increasingly self-sufficient as Caldwell and Spinks (1997) maintained, then parents' judgements and involvement will grow in importance.

Academically, this research has significance because it brings the realities of practice to scholar's thought, and provides an enriched understanding of the dynamics of Parent Advisory Councils. Parental involvement in educational governance for the province of British Columbia was acknowledged in the 1989 School Act (Statutes of British Columbia, 1989). PAC's right to advise was provided by Section 8.(4) which ensured contemporary parents' agendas, perspectives and values will have an influence on the shape of public education; as such they need to be better understood. (Martin,1991) The origins of these trends, and the agendas and values which lie behind them, were examined in order to discover how a balance of interests

may be achieved. In addition, whether or not a majority of parents really desire increased legislated power, and are truly interested in the accompanying responsibilities should be determined. As Fullan (1993) stated, "change is all around us....[the challenge] is learning how to contend with the forces of change- turning positive forces to our advantage, while blunting negative ones" (p.vii). This investigation is an important task as the educational system, like other organizations, is "never inert: it is a potent living thing. At any instant it represents... the sum total of its history and, simultaneously, its potential for shaping the future, its own and that of the entire fabric of circumstance within which it has its being" (Hodgkinson, 1996, p.57). With this understanding, this research may motivate others to pursue further investigations in the consideration of parents' values, perspectives, and agendas.

Personal Paradigm

This enquiry was undertaken with the recognition the researcher was looking through an individualized lens coloured by a personal paradigm comprised of academic studies, observed practice, professional opinions, and personal experiences. Hodgkinson's (1996) value paradigm and his work on value identification as the key to understanding behaviors and agendas; Fullan's (1991) notions that change is a process rather than an event, and those involved with education should become "skilled change agents with moral purpose" in order to make a difference in all students' lives and to develop greater change capacity in society's citizens, (1993, p.4-5); Caldwell, Smilanich and Spinks (1988) definition of equity as conceived in terms of providing the best opportunity for learning for every student, regardless of personal circumstance; and Dahl's (1991) clarification of the structural and personal limitations on agendas each contributed to the author's conceptual perspective of the issues studied. Professional concerns expressed by fellow educators in public schools regarding parents' participation, and concerns expressed by parents regarding their role as children's advocate, have indicated that one of the most significant issues is the value set of parents which includes concern for their children. Another significant value set is that of the author who believes in the public good, and in the nurture of our children toward responsible, caring citizenship which formed one of the basic tenants to the

now defunct Year 2000 Initiative.

Over the past two decades, parents' opportunities for influence and their sense of entitlement to participate in local school matters have increased. This phenomenon has been well recognized by Storey (1997) when he noted, "politics is a dimension of human behavior, not an aspect of organization" (p.44). The degree of direct political power or influence that parents have been legislated varies but the result may have been to increase parents' sense of legitimacy and, possibly, to have whetted their appetite for more power or influence in school governance. Parents' ambitions may pose a problem for those responsible for ensuring universality of quality public education. Dahl (1991) stated, "demands for participation tend to be narrow and to focus on special interests or single issues" (p.25). Recent and future legislation may have more far reaching consequences in Canadian public schools than we initially realize. Further, disparities among Canadian schools may emerge which reveal "have" and "have-not" schools. Thus, the evolving social, economic, academic and political milieu provided a frame of reference for the writer's reflection on emerging contemporary school governance. These evolving conditions establish the context for the author's personal paradigm.

Methodology

There are several types of qualitative research summarized by Cresswell (1998) as five traditions of inquiry, namely biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Cresswell stated, "The traditions differ in the diversity of information collected, the unit of study being examined, the extent of field issues, and the intrusiveness of the data collection effort" (p.135). When commenting on various approaches used for qualitative research, McMillan & Schumacher (1997) noted, "Case studies are appropriate for exploratory and discovery-oriented research... [which] are designed to lead to further inquiry" (p.395). For the purposes of this research a case study approach was selected as it provides for "an exploration of a "bounded system" or a case (or multiple cases)... involving multiple sources of information rich in context.... bounded by time and place" (p.61). A case study design is appropriate when researchers are interested in examining "groups of individuals participating in

an event or activity or an organization” (Cresswell, 1998, p.135). Furthermore, Yin (1994) has stated, “As a research endeavour, the case study contributes uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena” (p.2). Thus, a case study design provided the researcher a suitable vehicle to acquire a deeper understanding of parents' perspectives and values at a time of increasing legitimization of parents as new partners in school affairs and governance.

A 'Certificate of Approval' was granted by the University of Victoria's Human Ethics Committee prior to conducting this investigation. (See Appendix A). Permission from School District #61 (Greater Victoria) was not necessary as only parents were the focus of research. Letters outlining the purpose of the research and asking for voluntary participation were sent to potential participants to request they partake in an individual, in-depth interview and a follow-up small group interview to be held with their peers. A letter advising school principals of this research was also sent to the respective schools as a matter of courtesy. Copies of both letters can be found in Appendix B and C, respectively.

In this research the cases, or units of study, were ten Parent Advisory Council presidents randomly selected with quota sampling from thirty-eight elementary schools in School District #61 (Greater Victoria). (Cohen & Manion, 1994) As multiple cases were examined, this is a multiple case study. The contextual conditions for this enquiry were bounded by the school year 1999- 2000, and the ten elementary schools and their PAC's. In order to draw a proportionate quota sample, the 1999- 2000 Ministry of Education Inner City Funding list of elementary schools was obtained from the school district and divided into two lists based on whether or not a school received this funding. To acknowledge the diversity within the district the researcher decided to interview approximately twenty-five percent of the sample. Three schools were randomly selected from the inner city funded group, and seven schools were randomly selected from the non-inner city funded group. This funding is re-evaluated every year on the basis of shifting needs, and often changes. The necessary data for the investigation was obtained from a combination of ten individual and two group interviews. Data triangulation was accomplished through document analysis, individual in-depth interviews, and two follow-up interactive group sessions. Documents consisted of minutes from PAC meetings for the year to date, PAC

websites and other PAC-related literature. Pseudonyms were used for schools and participants to preserve anonymity, while all documents, transcriptions, notes and tapes were held in a locked drawer. Once the material was gathered, data were analyzed to discover commonalities and differences in parents' values, perspectives and agendas.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations

Limitations which affected the validity of the study were the number of Parent Advisory Councils for elementary schools; the negative effect of recruiting PAC presidents during May and June when they were busy with PAC reelections and/or warm weather activities; length of available time for interviews; the assumption participants were able to respond frankly and openly within the context of group membership; the author's bias and inexperience with academic research; the participants' bias; and utilizing a case study design. In addition, due to many factors, parent council's are not always representative of a school's population but the scope of this study was not large enough to include other parents. Consequently, the author acknowledges the views of these participants may not be those of all parents with children at their schools, nor of other PAC's presidents. Scarcity of literature and research on parents' values, perspectives and agendas regarding public education were also a limit to the study. In addition, data were not fully analyzed until the winter months of 2001, approximately seven to nine months after the interviews.

The author may or may not have been aware of all the factors influencing her judgment, yet every effort was made to remain impartial. To balance this the author's biases were reported in the conceptual framework, and outcomes which appeared contrary to the author's views were noted as "disconfirming evidence" for future reflective thought (Cresswell, 1998, p.187).

Although this investigation was subject to a number of limitations, analysis provided some useful insights and stimulated reflective thinking regarding the important issue of parental involvement. Furthermore, the outcomes of this study should serve to remind politicians, administrators, educators, parent groups and other stakeholders that public education goes beyond considerations of good practice; education is a value laden endeavour with far-reaching effects. As we enter the new millennium more research on this topic would be beneficial to

individuals associated and/or involved in school governance.

Delimitations

This study was conducted only in the province of British Columbia's School District # 61 (Greater Victoria), while only elementary schools' Parent Advisory Council presidents were asked for their participation as more parents are actively involved during their children's elementary years of education. Due to lack of resources, parents who have chosen to educate their children outside public schools, or any other stakeholder group were not invited to participate and were not investigated for their perspectives and values. No doubt an investigation of each of these various groups would likely yield quite different data as well as some commonalities. Such an undertaking should enrich our understandings of the multiple perspectives, values and agendas regarding contemporary public education of children.

Definition of Terms

The following glossary has been provided to clarify the meanings of the terms as they were used within this study:

Agendas- matters to be attended to, as at a meeting (*Collins Concise Dictionary Plus*, 1989, p.21).

For the purposes of this research, the dictionary definition of agenda is expanded to be matters to be accomplished which involve a complex of interest and influence framed by social, political and economic structures, and affected by individual or collective consciousness.

Call-back Program - program established by parent councils in many schools in which volunteer parents compare teachers' daily attendance lists with parents' daily recorded messages reporting their children's absence. Unexplained absences are noted, and students' guardians are called to ensure children's safety.

Case analysis-

Cross-case analysis- this applies to a collective case when more than one case is examined to discern common themes. Typically, this form of analysis follows within-case analysis. (Cresswell, 1998, p.250).

Within-case analysis- the identification of themes within a single case. With collective case studies “this analysis may suggest unique themes to a case. Or themes that are common to all cases studied” (Cresswell, 1998, p.252).

Categorical aggregation- a collection of instances from the data made by the researcher in the hope issue-relevant meanings will emerge. (Cresswell, 1998, p.154).

Change-

First-order changes are those that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of what is currently done “without substantially altering basic organizational features and the way people perform their roles” (Fullan, 1991, p.29).

Second-order changes “seek to alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together, including new goals, structures, and roles” (p.29).

Disconfirming evidence- unexpected outcomes which appeared contrary to the author's views noted for future reflective thought. (Cresswell, 1998, p.187).

Issue- “A topic of interest or discussion” (Collins Concise Dictionary Plus, 1989, p.663).

Perspectives- an individual's point of view.

-“A way of regarding situations, facts, etc., and judging their relative importance” (Collins Concise Dictionary Plus, 1989, p.962).

Quota sampling- an attempt “to obtain representatives of the various elements of the total population in the proportions in which they occur there” (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.89).

Value- “A value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action. ... Values may arise from conscious or *unconscious* motivational dynamics and they may be determining factors of attitudinal orientations and general predispositions to act” (Hodgkinson, 1996, p.111).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Knowledge is as much a construction by individuals as paintings are constructions by artists. When a representational artist attempts to reproduce the world around him, its shapes and colours have to be registered on his mind before his hand can register them on canvas.

Graham Martin (1981, p.31)

This literature review is divided into two main sections. The first section will examine historical precedents for the contemporary trend toward increased parental participation in public education, and explore the historical struggle between the two significant, opposing philosophical approaches to public education that continue to shape the debates, structures and values of Western countries' educational systems. The latter section will raise contemporary debates regarding governance models to situate contemporary parents' values, perspectives and agendas within the current political, economic and social context. Included is an examination of literature from other Western countries implementing change in educational governance, such as England, Australia and the United States, to identify possible influences on Canadian values, perspectives and agendas. At the conclusion of this review, directions of enquiry will be indicated to raise questions, stimulate reflective thought, and encourage fresh debate.

Change is a constant; yet, not all change is benign, nor inevitable. Today, in Canada and other Western, liberal-democratic nations, educational leaders and politicians are facing an onslaught of external pressure groups demanding changes in education (Goldring & Shapira, 1993; Bauman 1996). An argument can be made that such pressure for change is unprecedented since the inception of universal public education (Saul, 1995). Traditional pressure groups such as political, business and religious organizations have held varying agendas and influence on educational policy and practice but, over the past few decades, parents as a group have also increasingly become an important force within schools. Since the founding of public education, parents' influence has gone through cycles of greater or less involvement. To understand this current upswing the discussion of parental involvement in educational governance must be placed in historic as well as contemporary context.

Historical Precedents and Struggles

Opposing Philosophical Approaches

Parents' experiences with public school systems have their roots in the first half of the nineteenth century with the formation of common, uniform, publicly funded schools. By the early nineteenth century, the impetus for universal education, generated by leaders and populace, simultaneously resonated in several Western countries. After much debate and several decades, countries such as Canada, Great Britain and the United States established public education systems. The American historian, Burns (1982), called it, "an experiment in pure socialism, if socialism is defined as governmental ownership of certain facilities, and governmental hiring and firing of persons employed in those facilities, in order to carry out the purposes of the state" (p.501). Implicitly acknowledging the potential to shape students' values and opportunities, this scholar likened the situation for parents as handing over their "innocent and vulnerable children to the tender mercies of Leviathan"(p.501). Public education, equated in this statement as something which is found rather frightening, large and difficult to control, has been a powerful experiment which has radically affected the growth of the knowledge base, the spread of individual's sense of personal efficacy, and the shape of Western societies beyond the imagination of its founders.

Implemented for complex, often conflicting purposes, universal public education has always borne this legacy of duelling rationales. At its inception some argued public education was necessary to educate a nation's people for effective citizenship, while others argued public education would produce economic benefit by creating greater numbers of skilled workers. Supporting the position that education was necessary for the development and sustenance of a free nation, the American Thomas Jefferson declared in the early 1800's, "If a nation expects to be ignorant and free, in a state of civilization, it expects what never was and never will be" (Burns, 1982, p.501). Like Jefferson, many of his contemporaries shared the view that popular or universal education was vital to achieve and sustain the classic goals of liberty and equality. These leaders believed that at the heart of the matter was the need to educate citizens to ensure a

free government which represented the best interests of the majority of the population:

Schoolhouses were seen as “Temples of Freedom” as both the source and the guardian of liberty. ...higher hopes were held for education as a product and protector of equality, especially in the light of the educational privileges of the elites. (p.502)

Public education was viewed as the best way to spread these values among the greatest number of people.

This egalitarian rationale was countered by those who supported a minimal education for all citizens to enhance the economic benefits for the merchant class. Public education was regarded by these supporters as a method to carry out the purposes of the state, to create better workers, to inculcate ‘proper’ values, and “to control and discipline the children of an unruly, democratic people” (Burns, 1982, p.505). The economic argument used to enlist manufacturers’ support was summarized as, “Education has a market value... it may be turned into a pecuniary account: it may be minted, and will yield a larger amount of statutable coin than common bullion” (p.505). This diversity of goals, humanist versus capitalist, rooted in the earliest arguments in favour of public education, has continued to affect education ever since.

For Canada, Section 93 of the British North America Act (1867), re-titled the Constitution Act (1867) by the Constitution Act (1982), provided the constitutional basis for free and universal public elementary and secondary education throughout the new country. (Young & Levin, 1998) Attendance was to be compulsory at the elementary level, taxation was to be mandatory to support the school system, and the selection of texts was to be one of the chief responsibilities of each province’s Department of Education. This legislation marked the culmination of several decades of civil unrest simmering since the ill-fated 1837 Rebellion led by William Lyon McKenzie against the exclusionary, elitist practices of the colonial government who had been nick-named the Family Compact. After the attempted revolution the government viewed instances of localized autonomy with distrust. The arms-length practice of allowing local property owners “to meet, select three trustees from among themselves, and hire a teacher who, if approved by the appointed District Board of Education, was eligible for a grant-in-aid from the state” was now thought to have contributed to the insurrection. (Young & Levin, 1998, p.26)

In response to this civil unrest, The Common School Act (1846) was passed to establish a

strong central authority to prepare regulations and curricula, to authorize suitable textbooks, and to improve the quality of teaching through certification, inspection, and the construction of a normal school for teacher training. The curricula was of particular concern to the colonial government of the day due to widespread use of American texts which were often republican, democratic and anti-British in tone. (Young & Levin, 1998) However, notions of egalitarianism, spreading from successful revolutions in the latter half of the 1700's in both France and the United States, had permeated through Canada's population and could not be expunged. The populace's democratic notions of equality and liberty were further strengthened by their success building new lives for themselves in the rugged, sparsely populated land. Common experience was of land-ownership and collaboration with neighbours to ensure mutual survival; the effect was realization of a better quality of life for many, a belief in equality, and a conviction of a better future for their children. By the mid-1800's, many were generations removed from traditional, hierarchical governance structures of Great Britain and Europe. Yet, allegiances were not with the United States as many of the population were United Empire Loyalist families who had moved north during the American Revolution in the late 1700's, and/or had fought against the Americans in the War of 1812. More closely allied to Great Britain, these people wanted to establish a new nation based on a model of governance and law which reflected their unique history and values.

In 1846 Egerton Ryerson was appointed Superintendent of Schools for Canada West/Ontario. After travelling to Europe and Britain to observe their school systems, Ryerson chose the Irish National Readers for public schools for several reasons: the texts were graded, patriotic to Britain, non-sectarian although Christian, inexpensive, and Canadian publishers were allowed to re-print them. Cognizant of both governmental concerns and the public sense, Ryerson successfully managed to bridge the various interests and set the tone for Section 93 of the British North America Act (1867), by centralizing control within government, establishing a public school system, and facilitating local, economic spinoffs.

Precedents for Increased Parental Participation

Once established, a centrally controlled and administered public education system based on the principles of providing universal, quality education was the norm for many Western countries until the 1980's. The impetus for change began in the sixties with a movement towards viewing parents and students as resources or social 'capital', whose cooperation was enlisted to prevent "a further deterioration in the quality of the experience of children *and* of educators" (Sarason, 1995, p.7). Concurrently, traditional views of parents and community groups were altered to acknowledge their efforts to support students' success. Thus, roots for the transfer of responsibility and accountability from central authority to other agencies or individuals can be traced to initiatives of the 1960's. Local programs and American federal programs such as Head Start, and its extensions, Follow Through, and the Parent-Child Center Program, were based on the premise that professional intervention measures could involve and educate parents to improve student success within school, their community, and the workforce. Gordon observed, "those parents who volunteered to participate... seem to feel less alienated from American society" (p.65). While claiming any level of parental involvement benefited both children and parents, scholars reported that basic demographic factors beyond the scope of intervention programs such as crowded homes, housing quality, income level, and family structure were very important contributing factors to the ultimate success of parents' efforts. Overall, these programs were viewed as positive attempts to increase parents' aspirations and sense of efficacy while simultaneously benefiting their children.

Significantly, contemporary analysis of these projects noted the phenomenon that increasing numbers of parents were beginning to demand schools change to more accurately reflect what parents wanted. Issues of perspective, and the struggle for power or control were cited as posing a problem to finding a balance between parents and educators:

How, then, can one turn decision making, which involves complex abstraction, systems analysis, and complicated budgetary manoeuvring, over to people who are seen as lacking the ability even to prepare their own children adequately for school and society as it is? On the other hand, how can school people preserve for themselves all the decision making powers when they are in effect influencing the lives of parents and children, often without understanding the meanings of their decisions? Parental

involvement must somehow mean involvement of parents in partnership arrangements stressing the needs, strengths, concerns, and special knowledge the parents have and utilizing the expertise of the professional. This requires an atmosphere of mutual trust. (Gordon, 1968, p.72-73)

Thus, as early as the sixties scholars noted parents' growing restlessness and desire to increase their influence within schools. Approaches such as decentralization of control to the local school and its community were already being discussed as a way to increase parents' power. From these early studies it is possible to see parents' desire for their children's educational success as the root of their advocacy for increased power, and as the catalyst for a ripple effect of change within the school system.

Struggles for Influence in British Columbia

In Canada's province of British Columbia, political struggle for control of the curricula and direction of education has resulted in almost fifty official inquiries since the province's first School Act (Statutes of British Columbia, 1872). The formation of these statutes had been prompted by the province of British Columbia's 1871 entry into the Confederation of Canada, founded by the British North America Act (1867). Eight statutes have been considered major educational inquiries as they functioned like, or as, Royal Commissions which entail broader terms of reference. Barman and Sutherland (1995) stated, "the degree of success has related closely to several key factors, including the social, economic and political contexts out of which they emerged, the stature of their leadership, the extent of public input, and how well they read the public mood" (p.417). As an important component of the public mood, parents have had a long history of influencing education set amid the social, economic and political context of their era. These efforts were set amidst the challenge to traditional authority structures generated by World War I (1914-1918), the collapse of the traditional order of power held in the hands of aristocratic elites, and the rise of widespread agitation for populist empowerment as evidenced by the Russian Revolution, the Suffragette's efforts to achieve women's emancipation, the struggle to establish workers' unions, and parents' efforts to have a voice in their children's education, among others.

The latest political struggle over education in British Columbia has evolved from the most recent major educational inquiry, The Royal Commission on Education, commonly known as the Sullivan Commission (1988). Barry M. Sullivan (1988), a lawyer of moderate views, was given the concept of lifelong learning as the grounding or unifying theme for the inquiry. However, the "Year 2000" recommendations, as they came to be known, were soon largely overridden by public opinion. During the late 1980's and early 1990's, politicians and large corporations continued in their downward spiral of credibility with the public as they continued to increase their personal profit, build public debt, and downsize their staff and services. These practices meant harsh economic adjustments for many people as the economy shifted from natural resources to information technology, eco-tourism and service industries. Set amid the economic downturn, the notion of lifelong learning did not generate public support; instead it was viewed with public suspicion. Despite the sincerity and good intentions of many of those who contributed to the Sullivan report, the social, economic and political context of the late 1980's and early 1990's ensured the concept of life-long learning would be regarded by the public as political whitewashing.

Simultaneously, "accountability, higher standards, curricular relevance and "back to the basics" became buzz words in the media, and among a vocal portion of the general public" (Barman & Sutherland, 1995, p.423). Much of this discourse was lifted from other countries, mainly Great Britain, the United States, New Zealand and Australia, all of whom were undergoing a political move to the right in public policy, including education. By the early 1990's, bowing to public suspicion and media hype, British Columbia's government responded to the increasingly conservative political climate by committing the Ministry of Education:

to putting greater emphasis on "the basics" and a job-related curriculum, giving parents a set of standards against which to measure their children's performance and progress in school, providing detailed written report cards from kindergarten through grade 12, and accrediting elementary as well as high schools every six years with the results being made public. (p.424)

Thus, public opinion has played a major role in either discrediting or legitimizing educational inquiries and innovations in British Columbia. Further, other countries' policies, the public, and the role of the media must be acknowledged as significant influences in shaping public

education both here in British Columbia and in other jurisdictions.

Legitimization of Parents in Educational Governance

Despite public hostility and the capitulation of the government on many of the initial recommendations of the Sullivan Report (1988), there were some lasting effects. Notably, parents' voice(s) in educational governance in British Columbia was officially sanctioned for the first time. The following year the School Act (Statutes of British Columbia, 1989) adopted the Report's recommendation to recognize Parent Advisory Councils [PAC's], parent entitlements and responsibilities. (see Table 1) In response to the official legitimization of parents' groups, the Federation of Parents' name was changed to the British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC), a new constitution was written, and major goals were formalized such as advocacy, building partnerships, and parental involvement. (BCCPAC, 1997) (see Table 2) Like parents in many Western countries, British Columbia's parents' influence had progressed from individual effort in the private sphere of their homes, to collectively organized parent councils' efforts in the public sphere, to official recognition through governmental legislation.

TABLE 1**The School Act (Statutes of British Columbia, 1989)**

Parent's Advisory Councils

Section 7.(1) (c):

A parent of a student of school age attending a school is entitled to belong to a parents' advisory council established under Section 8.

Section 8.:

(1) Parents of students attending a school or a Provincial school may apply to the board or the minister, as the case may be, to establish a parents' advisory council for that school.

(2) On receipt of an application under subsection (1), the board or minister shall establish a parents' advisory council for the school or the Provincial school, as the case may be.

(3) There shall be only one parents' advisory council for each school or Provincial school.

(4) A parents' advisory council through its elected officers may advise the board and the principal and staff of the school or the Provincial school respecting any matter relating to the school or the Provincial school.

(5) A parents' advisory council, in consultation with the principal, shall make bylaws governing its meetings and the business and conduct of its affairs, including bylaws governing the dissolution of the council.

Note. From The School Act (Statutes of British Columbia, 1989), British Columbia Ministry of Education, Policy, Planning and Legislative Division, Legislative Services Branch, pg. C-21, Dec.,1990, Victoria, BC.

TABLE 2

Goals of British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils

British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (1997) promotional literature stated major projects as advocacy, building partnerships, and parental involvement. Their goals, advocacy, building partnerships, and parental involvement, are listed as follows:

- to exercise leadership in developing and expressing collective parental views as identified through Parent Advisory Councils, regarding the public school education and well-being of children in the Province of British Columbia
- to carry on activities to promote and enhance meaningful parent participation in an advisory role at the school, school district, and provincial levels

Note. From British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC) promotional pamphlet, p.8, 1997, Vancouver, BC.

However, the trend over the last decade or more in Canada to pass provincial governmental legislation involving parents in school governance has been accompanied by limiting their new role to the right to advise. (Martin, 1991) Parental involvement in these provinces has been limited to participation as a parent council member, dialogue with children's teachers and the principal, and personal interaction with their children's educational experiences. The exception to this model is the educational system in Quebec where parents were legislated a functional role in schools' decision-making in 1988. In this largely French speaking province parents constitute the majority on each school's orientation committee which is responsible for determining the school's aims, objectives and rules of conduct; evaluating expenditures and selection criteria for the principal; and generating revenue. (Martin) Many Western countries are likely unaware of this initiative to more closely involve parents in local school affairs as most documents and assessments are in French. This situation indicates there may be other unknown models of parental involvement where language raises a screen to the English speaking world.

Since the late 1980's, school governance models adopted by Western countries have legislated parental involvement to varying degrees ranging from the right to advise, to the right to have a voice in decision-making processes at site-based management models of school governance. (Martin, 1991) However, it is important to understand this devolution of power to local authorities is more than a response to satisfy stakeholders' demands for more influence. This transfer of responsibility and accountability from government to other agencies indicates a political agenda is at work.

Contemporary Debates

Search for New Models of Educational Governance

Educational reforms, almost thirty years later, are still a subject for debate. Sarason (1995) stated, "What is explicit is that both educators and the public are dissatisfied with what schools are and do or do not do.... What is implicit... is that educators and the public sense that the governance structure of our public schools somehow has to be part of the problem" (p.3).

Contending barriers between the various layers of school hierarchy and parent-community groups reinforce the status quo by hindering or preventing the expression of individual members' criticisms or suggestions for improvements, this American scholar proposed, "the governance structure of our schools has to be changed if we stand any chance at all of preventing a further deterioration in the quality of the experience of children *and* of educators" (p.7). Further, he contended the way individual's, including parents', assets and deficits are defined forms another barrier to the resolution of the problem- the deterioration of education. While other scholars may agree or disagree with this point of view, efforts since the mid-eighties to restructure educational governance with parents included to varying degrees within new models indicates there has been strong support for this position.

Shortly after the 1988 The Royal Commission on Education in British Columbia, Storey (1989) also recognized parental involvement in education as part of contemporary reality. Citing academic research, he stated parents can make a critical difference to student achievement. However, like Sarason (1995) and other scholars, Storey noted fewer identifiable effects on student outcomes can be discerned when parents are involved in liaison and public relations activities. Nonetheless, these academics and educators supported parental involvement in school programs and activities, and student learning for both educational and political reasons. Parents' motivation to be included in the decision-making process is understandable when viewed from, "the necessity and wisdom of the political principle: when you are going to be affected, directly or indirectly, by a decision, you should stand in some relationship to the decision-making process" (Sarason, p.7). Furthermore, consensus among these scholars supported the view that as schools depend on public goodwill for their survival and public assistance to provide the best service, it is wise to foster some level of parental support and inclusion.

Nearly a decade later, Storey (1997) noted the growing trend toward jurisdictions mandating parent involvement in educational governance in response to demands for change and increased power. Agreeing with Sarason (1995), this Canadian scholar stated, "The political reality is that in many areas in which our lives are affected by government and by social institutions, individuals and groups are demanding access and influence. In many instances, senior levels of government are encouraging those initiatives"(p.220). Citing examples in

Victoria, Australia; South Carolina, United States; and Great Britain, he reported schools in these jurisdictions have been given the opportunity to respond to parents' initiatives by functioning as grant-maintained schools outside the local education authority. Further, Storey observed, "The primary characteristic of mandated involvement, regardless of the source of the mandate, is that the minimum expectations are set outside the school" (p.226-227). In general, two types of mandated parental involvement may be distinguished from the trend to recognize parents in school governance. One type of governance model provides parents with the right to advise; the intent in this case is for parents' advice to be influential. The other common type of governance model, like the variation used in Britain, gives more authority to parents as they are part of a school-level governing body. No matter the form of educational governance, parents' inclusion is a contemporary reality. The new challenge may be building and maintaining effective partnerships with the shared goal of providing excellence in education for all students.

Possible Challenges for Effective Partnerships

Forging cohesive, effective partnerships in educational governance between traditional authority figures and parents may be a challenging endeavour. In an examination of the history of home-school relationships, Swap (1993) observed a pattern of conflict, extending from colonial times to the present, had caused these two systems to be worlds apart. Although schools and families are both engaged in a complementary task, instead of parents and teachers acting as natural allies, this relationship is often adversarial due to the differences of the nature of their relationships with students. This scholar observed:

The parents' focus is on the needs and interests of their own child, while teachers (and other school personnel) must attend to the needs of many children. Parents strive for the best possible education for their child, while educators must seek balance in distributing limited resources to many. (p.19)

Although the establishment of effective partnerships with parents and educators is a worthy undertaking, this historical polarity indicates the effort to establish equity for all students is a

complex endeavour.

Educational leaders and parents involved in establishing partnerships for educational governance may encounter difficulty reaching agreement on goals, policy directions and/or practices. The inclusion of parents has added complexity to the governance process by involving a disparate group of individuals. The very diversity of participants and perspectives involved in educational governance is unlike many other governing bodies, and may complicate the decision-making process. Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach (1998) stated, "In a more exaggerated form than a corporate team, council members have very different backgrounds and potentially disparate and conflicting agendas" (p.5). Fullan (1999) observed, "Diversity means different races, different interest groups, different power bases and basically different lots in life... the problem is that there are great tendencies to keep people different than ourselves at a distance" (p.2). Noting schools have often been given the task to effect significant changes in society, these scholars stated difficult, complex dilemmas are often posed for the various parties responsible for the governance of education. Bauman (1996), observed:

Governors, administrators, teachers, parents, students, and reformers are governing when they become active in making important decisions about how schools operate. ...they will need a good understanding of formal governance structures as well as the informal and often complex qualities of governance as political dialogue.... this process is a critical part of a democratic society. (pp.6-7)

Equitable pathways will need to be found to resolve these differences, to develop understanding, and to ensure the consideration of short and long term consequences for students.

As Gordon (1968) discovered thirty years previously, another challenge for increasing parental involvement in school partnerships may arise from the fact many parents view themselves as lacking the necessary abilities. In addition, if accountability for outcomes has widened to include parents involved in school governance, some parents may decide not to take on this added responsibility. Citing research which indicated parents' attitudes and beliefs may be particularly problematic, Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1998) stated these attitudes include:

adherence to traditional roles (David, 1994; Jewell & Rosen, 1993); lack of interest in educational issues beyond the needs of their own children (David, 1994; Jenni, 1991); low expectations for children (Davies, 1993); negative attitudes concerning the role of

schools in responding to social inequities (Davies, 1993); and lack of respect for and trust in teachers (Easton et al., 1991). (p.4)

With respect to involvement in school affairs, Sarason (1995) advised that students and parent-community groups often have “difficulty seeing themselves as possessing assets... relevant to the intricacies and dilemmas of decision-making” (p.74). However, regardless of the reasons for parents not to participate more fully in school governance, those responsible for making decisions for the welfare of the whole school need to take into account the best interests of these absent voices.

Other difficulties associated with parents which may impede the effectiveness of parents on educational governance teams, or councils, include time pressures, perceptions parents lack real influence in school-based decisions, and disagreement about acting as volunteers. In support of these views, Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach's research (1998) indicated factors which mitigate effectiveness were “excessive demands on parents' time (Hallinger, Murphy & Hausman, 1992), and lack of meaningful contact with schools (Davies, 1993)” (p.4). Further, these scholars findings indicated, despite large demands on council members' time, parents had little real influence on the allocation of school resources. Other significant problems noted were parent members with a narrow range of interests and power struggles which tended to result in decisions which reduced the schools' ability to treat students equitably.

Nonetheless, by the mid 1990's Bauman (1996) observed governing bodies of education, faced with taxpayers' challenges to increase efficiency despite the decline of both inner-city neighbourhoods and financial support, turned to increased reliance on parents for the education of their children and as volunteers in the school. Yet, as Bauman noted, “Parent groups are often divided over the issue of providing human services in schools” (p.166). In addition, these governing bodies were increasingly negotiating school-based partnerships between public and private organizations in exchange for fiscal support and other services. The trend to decrease funding of public education has put pressure on both the governing bodies of the schools and on parents to make up perceived shortfalls. Schools increasingly rely upon parents for program support; achieving school goals; filling in as personnel when government funding falls short of perceived needs; and donating or raising money for resources such as computers, library

materials, team uniforms and playground equipment. This move to increase parent-community involvement and decrease governmental responsibility “does not ensure improvement in educational outcomes; it makes *accountability* for outcomes more widespread” (Sarason,1995, p.68). Yet, observing such deferred accountability is misplaced, Coulombe (1995) stated, “Social, cultural, and economic issues affect the number of parents who get involved as well as the degree to which they involve themselves” (p.73). As parental representation is uneven both as a resource and as participants in educational governance, an argument can be made that in some instances the best interests of all students may not be fairly represented by those parents who do participate. Furthermore, even with the best of intentions, not all parent groups have the resources to adequately support their school. Given these realities, questions could be raised regarding the potential for the erosion both of the principle of universality of quality public education, and the traditional role of government's responsibility for ensuring this quality for all students.

Another potential difficulty for building effective governance teams arises from concern over the possibility that special interest groups may dominate parent groups. (Crozier,1997; Vincent,1996; Wragg,1989) Noting the challenge presented by the practicalities of implementing increased legislated powers for parent groups, Wragg suggested that turning parents' increased powers into actuality is a complex task. This scholar observed there is a potential for inequitable distribution of power or influence within parent groups:

there will always be some parents whose individual or collective power is stronger than others. Those with greatest influence... will probably be (a) the more articulate, willing to write letters or go to appeal panels, (b) the better off, able to pay fees or higher travel costs, (c) those belonging to a pressure, interest or religious group, who can argue that their children must be educated alongside those of like-minded parents and (d) parents with a special case, like ... some specific social need. The least potent will be working class parents who do not understand how the education system works, or indeed how power is exercised in society. (p.127)

This concern for the lack of representation of lower socio-economic parents in the decision-making process, and the actual level of influence or power of special interest groups among the parents suggest that some measures need to be in place to ensure a concern for the best interests of all students is not displaced.

Furthermore, Wragg observed a deeper look should be given to the devolvement of powers to parent groups, and consideration given to what powers parents ought to have. Supporting closer examination of this trend, Golby (1989) queried, "First the deeper political background needs to be considered. Why the emphasis on parents at this time?" (p.135). Linking Western governments' moves to legislate increased parental involvement in educational governance with the adoption of the metaphor of 'the market', Golby (1989) stated this metaphor and its accompanying discourse had been used widely to rename social services and to re-frame its relationships. For instance, words and phrases recently adopted in Health and Education subtly altered existing relationships by transforming patients and students into 'consumers', and medical care and curriculum as services to be 'delivered'. Reconstituting everyday discourse is a necessary element to effecting ideological shifts such as redefining our society in terms of the marketplace.

With regards to potential development or deeper entrenchment of a multi-tiered society, Golby (1989) questioned, "... it is arguable how far an efficient and just service can be provided within a market for education devolved to the parents. Would not the free play of parental choice be both inefficient and unfair as well as chaotic in implementation?" (p.135). This concern for potential inequities in public education was shared more recently by Crozier (1997):

just as research into school 'choice' has shown that the educational 'market' can advantage or disadvantage parents depending on their particular social, cultural and economic circumstances (see, for example, Ball, 1993; Gewirtz, Ball & Bowe, 1995), it is my contention that parents' social class location has a direct impact on their ability to intervene in their child's schooling and to participate as 'active consumers'. The active consumer is the parent who can discern the nature and value of the education on offer and act on this, in order to maximise the opportunities for her/his child to achieve success..." (p.188)

Disputing governmental claims that recent educational policy had created conditions for greater parental intervention for *all* parents, this scholar elaborated, "Behind these sentiments it is argued, rather than egalitarianism, is the strategy to operationalise an educational market economy; hence, the location of parents in the role of consumers" (p.188).

While noting more women than men generally constitute the membership of parent groups, and acknowledging gender differences have been found in terms of parents' stance,

attitudes and language, Crozier (1997) argued social class is more indicative of parents who are “proactive and assertive in relation to the school than others” (p.188). Substantiating these findings, Vincent (1996) stated for many parents “the idea of acting as a consumer of education on their children’s behalf had little meaning or relevance.... [Parents’] capability for agency was heavily circumscribed by the multiplicity of forces, attitudes and relationships” (p.477). Critical of the assumptions all parents could successfully involve themselves in educational governance, or, more simply, work on behalf of their own children, Vincent contended factors such as gender, race, culture, religion and class directly affected each parent's ability to exercise and/or access power. In these researchers’ view, parents positioned as consumers in an educational market translated over time to wider divisions between social classes, and to greater social inequities. Further, potential for parents with more individual or collective power to dominate other parents was viewed as a valid concern.

Central Requirements for Effective Partnerships

Given increased parental involvement in educational governance is a reality in many jurisdictions, recognizing potential strengths and weaknesses is prudent. More challenging is understanding parents as participants within this sphere, no matter their limitation to advise or act. Parental involvement is now a *fait accompli*, legitimized through legislation. Parents’ influence is part of the educational dynamic. As legislation is implemented, ensuring socially constructive, positive participation may be problematic for any or all parties. However, various scholars have identified key elements critical to forging effective partnerships between the traditional players in educational governance and parent groups.

Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach (1998) suggested the sharing of knowledge, power and rewards situated in a supportive, coherent context are key elements for the achievement of legitimate participation in educational governance. To assist in this process Leithwood, et al. recommended governing bodies utilize Lawler’s four central requirements for legitimate participation: “knowledge and skill, power, information, and rewards” (p.4). Stating a process must be put into place for moving these four components down to the lowest level in the

hierarchy, these scholars recommended a supportive, clear context is essential for their distribution. This context, at once social, political and economic, requires clarity, purpose and a spirit of cooperation among all players. Supporting the importance of building a positive relationship between traditional educational leaders and parents, Sconyers (1996) stated the emerging “political reality dictates that to be effective, educational leaders must develop a good working relationship with these newly powerful players” (p.2). Furthermore, Fullan (1999) observed cooperative behavior within collaborative cultures lead to more effective and healthier societies. Given the diversity of parents, and the likelihood of a multitude of agendas competing for attention and influence, the difficulty of achieving effective, supportive partnerships is daunting but not impossible.

Other researchers (Gordon, 1968; Sarason, 1995; Storey, 1989,1997) noted the importance of mutual trust, respect, and the identification of mission or goals to the creation of effective partnerships. Sarason declared the “degree and quality of the mutual trust and respect” are more important than the forms for the realization of the spirit of involvement in decision-making (p.75). In addition, rather than viewing some individuals as possessing certain deficits, this scholar advocated a positive approach in which each person's assets are discovered and utilized to enhance the team as a whole. While concurring that trust and respect are essential for effective partnerships, Storey contended something more is required:

The partnership enterprise will succeed or fail on the basis of its links to mission. Mission lends purpose to our decisions, meaning to our choices, and direction to our actions. It gives us a frame of reference for debates about the programs we will plan and the events we will arrange. In short, it makes partnership relevant. (p.244-245)

Thus, mutual trust, respect and a sense of mission are essential ingredients for not only the creation of productive partnerships in educational governance but for their success or failure.

Storey (1997) noted there are likely to be struggles in the effort to establish effective partnerships with parents, but not only parents may present difficulties during this process. Noting in some instances the challenge is to overcome resistance on the part of traditional players in school governance, Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach (1998) identified, “the purposes, motives and attitudes of teachers and administrators as the central challenges to council implementation, not lack of skill” (p.19). Despite the difficulties inherent to changing power

structures, clarification of each party's mission, or agenda, and the underlying values can help achieve effective partnerships. Storey advised, "Those struggles will be worthwhile if at the heart of them is an undeniable effort to have the best for learners" (p.259). Thus, agreement on core values and goals will assist the partnership enterprise. Furthermore, Leithwood et al. concluded better effectiveness may be achieved when parents are clear about their roles and the goals of the council, when access is provided to professional development for parental participation, when they receive encouragement, and when parents have oral fluency and expert knowledge. A clearly articulated mission is essential to the establishment and success of effective partnerships.

Although identification of a commonly held sense of values and mission regarding public education are considered essential to building and sustaining effective partnerships, whether these values are sufficiently widely held seems key to widespread success of partnerships with parents. Interestingly, an American study conducted in 1994 by the Public Agenda Foundation among two disparate groups of parents discovered more similarities than dissimilarities in parents' views and their underlying values. (Sconyers, 1996) Finding parents did not differ so drastically in their concerns, this research explored views held by 'conservative' parents and 'Traditional Christian' ('born again', or evangelist), versus other parents not associated with the right. Further, the research indicated:

the views of conservative or traditional parents may not be as extreme as some of the groups who claim to represent them.... It may well be that parents who hold more extreme views are better organized politically, get more press, and seem to represent more voices than they do. (p.6)

Noting most of the parents surveyed were actively involved in their children's education, and were willing to invest more financial resources to improve educational programs and results, Sconyers listed the similarities in their views and values. Parents from both groups placed as much emphasis on their children's acquisition of good work habits and citizenship skills, as they did on academic content. Most parents in this survey saw schools "as integral to democracy.... [in which parents want] children of all skill and income levels to succeed. And they want attitudes of fairness to predominate, even when it comes to marginalized populations"(p.6). Other concerns mentioned by both groups of parents included provision by schools for the

emotional and health needs of students, and for services such as vision and hearing checks, meals, and child care for working parents. In addition, these parents did not favour public funding of private schools. Thus, despite messages put forth by some special interest groups, certain core views and values regarding public education's mission were shared among diverse groups of parents.

Significantly, Fullan (1999) contended that reaching agreement on a common goal is not sufficient for the achievement of effective, equitable partnerships with parents. This scholar advised, "It will take more than "the direct approach of naming the goal and mobilizing to achieve it... as a continuous preoccupation with making virtuous improvements in a world in which the particular pathways to success are literally unknowable in advance of doing something"(p.1). A combination of self-interested, political, and moral forces will be needed in order for people to see each other as interdependent, fellow citizens rather than obstacles. Further, Fullan advocated recognition of the importance of moral purpose in education both at the micro and macro level:

At the micro level, moral education means making a difference in the life-chances of all students- more of a difference for the disadvantaged because they have further to go. At the macro level, moral purpose is education's contribution to societal development and democracy. A strong public school system... is the key to social, political and economic renewal in society. (p.1)

Yet, due to the chaotic complexity of postmodern society and worldwide diversity, defining a moral purpose, making progress in its achievement, and staying committed is no small task. As Fullan and other scholars acknowledge, the benefit to students ensure forging effective partnerships is always a worthwhile endeavour.

Identification of Parents' Perspectives and Values

There has been little research on the identification of parents' agendas and their underlying perspectives and values. The need to clarify various participants' missions, or agendas, and the values which lie behind them, may be considered essential for developing, understanding and achieving successful working partnerships. Storey (1997) stated , "our most

productive work in regard to agendas probably will be done as we seek to identify interests, because if we set that as our before-action priority, we will be less likely to obscure interests by focusing on positions” (p. 156). Recognizing the importance of determining parents’ interests, and keeping in mind the common good, Golby (1989) advised, “only when the parents’ interests are worked out in relation to those of other parties to the work of schools can a satisfactory settlement be accomplished. Socially satisfactory solutions are necessary and these extend beyond the demands of the parents” (p. 134). Crucial to the health of any organization, including education, “is the sociocultural network of values and relations” (Dahl, 1991, p. 69). As Hodgkinson (1996) observed, “Values, morals, and ethics intrude into every interstice of organizational life” (p. vii). Thus, the identification of the complex of values brought to educational partnerships among all parties can only serve to provide clarity for future endeavours, and, in particular, illuminate a pathway to forging effective relationships with parents.

Concluding Comments

The basic dichotomy presented by the opposing philosophical arguments used to establish universal public education over 130 years ago still appear to be with us as we enter the new millennium. Together, the argument for developing educated citizens capable of sustaining a liberal democracy, or the posit in favour of producing workers trained to fit the needs of the economy, have created the ongoing rationale for the existence of public education. While the predominance of one view or the other has been cyclical, few can argue with the overall benefit public education has conferred to both the majority of students and our larger society. As an ‘experiment in socialism’, public education has been a powerful change agent as our society evolved from agricultural to industrial based economies. (Burns, 1982) Moreover, as we enter the information age where knowledge and education will be the key to not only the health of our economies but our liberal democracies, potential exists to see a merging of these two philosophical approaches to public education.

In today’s environment in which traditional resource-based economies are disappearing,

pay equity challenges are slowly recognizing educational over physical requirements, and large agricultural operations are displacing small ones, education is increasingly becoming the means to access a 'reasonable' standard of living. As such, struggles for influence and power by individuals and groups may take on new urgency. Furthermore, a variety of special interest groups may recognize the potential for furthering their goals by involvement in public education. However, with regards to this research, parents' well-meaning concern for their children has resulted in their increased demands for influence and power in educational governance. Parents' increasing presence in education, first solicited in the 1960's as academic support for their children, had progressed by the eighties and nineties to inclusion in newly legislated models of school governance.

The necessity of forging new partnerships with parent groups has brought with it the challenges involved in creating and sustaining effective partnerships. Documented by scholars (Coulombe, 1995; Crozier, 1997; Golby, 1989; Swap, 1993; Vincent, 1996), these challenges included diverse attitudes and beliefs; lack of clarity about the roles and goals of the governing council; the issue of acting as volunteers in schools; some parents' concern resting more with their own children rather than with students as a whole; the domination of articulate, well-organized individuals; and unequal representation of parents. Further, trends for governments to devolve some powers to local schools, and for increasing parental involvement at the local level has been accompanied by reductions in public funding. This lack of funds has caused the birth of another trend in which governing bodies of schools feel increasingly pressured to negotiate corporate sponsorships in exchange for fiscal support and other services. (Bauman, 1996) Taken together, these challenges make contemporary educational governance a complex task.

Nonetheless, the new political reality requires the recognition of parents and the necessity of building effective partnerships. For this to occur, knowledge and skill, power, information, and rewards must be shared equitably among those responsible for ensuring the best interests of all students are realized. (Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach, 1998) The development of shared vision and goals may also serve to act in unifying possible diverse positions. (Sarason, 1995; Sconyers, 1996) Furthermore, an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect must be established, and mission identified. (Gordon, 1968, Sarason, 1995; Storey, 1997)

Overall, these scholars indicated a way through the diversity and competing interests of the various players in educational governance may be discovered by identifying the underlying values regarding public education which lie beneath stated positions (Storey, 1997). If the majority of parents still hold similar values and expectations for public education, then the realization of effective partnerships with parents is achievable.

Noting the direction of many Western countries to adopt legislation involving parents in educational governance, Sarason (1995) observed, "Laws, ... are reflections of social attitudes and change;... they are outcroppings of social change the pace and consequences of which are far from predictable" (p.75). Once a change in principle has been formally recognized, its effects are likely to strengthen and spread. The laws in many Western jurisdictions have changed and continue to evolve as a response to social and political demands for more inclusive, parent-friendly legislation. Although consequences vary according to the particular model adopted as legislation, the 'percolating effects' have been far-reaching and continue to spread. Yet, it is not enough to admit parents as partners in the educational enterprise. The principles which define the purpose of public education must be revisited to provide direction for all those involved in educational governance. In addition, assessments must be made to discover what parents really want from their involvement in school affairs; to investigate whether parental involvement has had positive or negative effects on the overall welfare of students; to determine parents' underlying values regarding public education; and as accountability is widened by governments, to ensure parents are able and willing to take up this task. The welfare of our students, the quality of their educational experiences, and the issue of equity for all students may be at stake.

CHAPTER THREE: PERSONAL PARADIGM

Begin by considering yourself- no, rather end by that.

St. Bernard, 12th century.

The conceptual context for this research is the culmination of academic studies, observed practice, professional opinions and personal experience. Together, these elements formed the foundation of the author's lens for studying parental involvement in educational governance. Given the scarcity of a theoretical model, the author had to recognize and accept the complex challenge of endeavouring to develop a personal paradigm from these experiences. This exercise took much reflective thought and the recognition that not all the elements which shape one's perspective can be fully recognized, nor is it a fixed but rather a constantly evolving point of view. While acknowledging other influences exist, the writer finally discerned four key dimensions as central to her personal paradigm, namely: values; change as a process; politics, power and influence; and personal experience. These dimensions will first be described and discussed in context with parental involvement in educational governance, and then combined to form the author's personal paradigm at the conclusion of the chapter.

Although each of the dimensions noted were considered as separate entities, certain 'touchstones' were found in them all. Of these personal markers, an unabated curiosity for discovering society's mechanisms and currents of thought, a deep belief in liberal democracy, and a collectively understood sense of the public 'good' figure prominently. Others are a personal conviction that society's health rests with both the words and deeds of individual citizens, combined with public policy developed for long term advancement of this common good. In particular, a concern for the quality and universality of public education as it faces challenges such as meeting individual needs, cultural diversity, a maturing teacher population, and the advent of technologies impacts on the writer's view.

In addition, the author's lens is largely viewed through a Canadian sensibility formed from a history in which generations struggled to reach a more-or-less single tiered, equitable, tolerant society based on British common law and governance structures, and the Canadian

creed of 'peace, order and good government'. Legislation such as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), the Multicultural Act (1986) and the Official languages Act (1969) have all set the tone for a unique Canadian identity of tolerance and recognition which foster achievement of all citizens' and newcomers' potential. Admittedly, the process has been flawed, but this value system has become integrated in the nation's social fibre as evidenced by the provision of quality, universal public programs such as Health and Education. However, in the cyclical struggle between economic versus public interest, it appears at the moment that economic forces, currently sizing up the profit margin on public services such as education, seem to be moving into ascendancy over publically-minded efforts to foster a healthy, just society. After reflective thought, the writer believes there is a misfit between recent actions of our federal and provincial governments in support of corporate interests, and the values internalized by the majority of Canadians. In particular, as a teacher and a parent once involved in parent committees, the author's interest in the increasing involvement of parents in educational governance was largely motivated by a curiosity to understand what were the reasons behind this political move, who would benefit, did parents want this responsibility, would it ensure or damage efforts at equity and access for all parents and students no matter their socio-economic status, and would it be possible for parents to be made a scapegoat as government devolved its responsibility? Furthermore, had there been evaluation of parental involvement in school governance and if so, what were the possible long-term, effects on students, and ultimately our society? Thus, values, change processes, politics, and personal experience shaped the following delineation of the personal paradigm behind this research.

Values in Action

Significance of Values

Over the past decade of study this researcher has come to more fully understand the Eurocentric, or American, or Canadian slants on various contemporary and historical viewpoints, including my own. Included in this process was the identification of all the "isms",

dynamics. The author became fascinated with the realization of the significance of values as the core to these “ism's”, and to people’s, nations and collectives’ actions, and further, that many different, sometimes conflicting, values may be held simultaneously. Hodgkinson's (1983, 1991, 1996) works were key to these insights, particularly the notion that values are often the central motivational force behind many actions. Refining Parsons's 1951 definition of a value as a concept of the desirable, Hodgkinson (1983) offered a more enriched definition which stated, “values are concepts of the desirable with motivating force or, concepts of the desirable which tend to act as motivating determinants of behaviour” (p.16). This interpretation of values as the root to behaviours makes it a more comprehensive tool in the effort to arrive at enriched understanding.

In order to gain insight into actions and/or positions, Hodgkinson (1996) noted the importance of recognizing the reality of the values which lie behind interests. This advice may be applied to a wide variety of declarations, positions, and actions, yet the challenge to identify the significant values driving the words and deeds cannot be underestimated. Wars, religious strife, divorce, to fights on the schoolyard, as well as the refusal to fight, the practice of tolerance and respect, to acts of kindness may be presented as actions intended to promote interests, yet the difficulty is determining the underlying values. Philosophy, the consideration of values, is new to this author; it holds promise for developing an enriched understanding of both the idiographic and the nomothetic- the individual and the collective! With respect to individual parents and their collective role in school governance, the challenge is identifying the range of values, emotional through rational to metaphysical, which bring parents to such involvement.

Metavalues

The author believes in the existence of values common to the majority of people. Hodgkinson (1983) refers to these as metavalue, defined as “a concept of the desirable so vested and entrenched that it seems to be beyond dispute or contention [which are] usually unexpressed or unexamined assumption[s]” (p.43). It has been evidenced by the actions of particular individuals worldwide, and the reactions of many when they sense what is right. This

sense is a common sense. For example, when, after 50 years of the Cold War, Gorbachev had the courage and common sense to lead the Soviets and the world away from the nuclear threat of annihilation towards a new detente, the symbolism of breaking down the Berlin Wall was understood by peoples on both sides. On all sides. The excitement and hope people felt as they rejoiced at the end of WWII was shared again, reflected in the happy faces of the crowds, as we watched this infamous wall torn down. Captured and relayed by media, it was celebrated simultaneously in front of television screens and radios around the world. A right was correcting a wrong; emotion triumphed over intellect, unity over segregation, and connectedness over isolation. This joy did not negate the reality of loss and devastation, yet it was not to be repressed. Intuitively and intellectually we were part of it. This event marked a common sense moment celebrating what was perceived and understood to be right. Such moments illuminate our common metavalues.

Today's leaders cannot depend on unquestioning agreement from their followers or citizenry. Questioning, a metavalue always present in Western society but contained to small groups, spread during the 1960's and 70's. Now widespread practice, the act of questioning authority and societal norms is currently gaining in momentum in developing countries. Politicians, bureaucrats and educational leaders, their policies and actions, and many societal norms faced with widespread questioning have changed and continue to evolve. Today, there is a recognition consensus must be found to gain widespread support which could be the realization of the democratic notion of *government by the people* -all people. In many countries, citizens are insisting their leaders adopt democratic government; the world wide web and other technological advances have made gate-keeping information more difficult; and it is increasingly harder for political despots to escape international justice. As the common sense of what constitutes right continues to gain power and influence throughout the world, contemporary leadership must increasingly take this into account in their policy development and practice.

This concept of metavalues led the author to seek the underlying core values to do with public education. These values, often conflicting, have shaped the course of education since its inception, determining who could be taught what, when, where and by whom. Furthermore, institutional values may be separated from personal ones, and evaluated for their influences.

Discovering and recognizing these core values is essential to knowing where contemporary parents are coming from when they enter into the political arena of public education.

Value Paradigm

As a way through the complexities of contemporary challenges, Hodgkinson (1996) advised, "We must choose between rights and goods as well as between right (world peace) and good (chocolate)"(p.121). To assist this endeavour and increase our understanding, Hodgkinson developed a basic value paradigm consisting of four types of values. (See Figure 1). This value paradigm lends itself to "interpretation, the discovery of meaning and the process of understanding", all key elements to understanding the essence of individual's and group's agendas. (p.101). It ranges from Type I (principles, or metaphysical), Type II A (rational-consequence), Type II B (rational-consensus), to Type III (preference) (p.115). Type I values are considered transrational, beyond reason, as they imply "an act of faith or intent or will- a conviction manifested in the acceptance of a *principle*" (p.118). For example, religious beliefs or a fervent belief in a particular leader or ideology are Type I values. At the other extreme Type III values are based on the individual's preference structure; they are self-justifying, "rooted in the emotional structure,... affective, idiosyncratic, idiographic, and direct. They are basically a-social and hedonistic" (p.119).

For Hodgkinson, Type II A & B constitute a middle ground, "the realm of common sense and *savoir faire*. ... (not) of ultimate values (but of) approximate values... subject to the criteria of consensus and consequences... (and) at the heart of administrative philosophy" (p.228). Type II values are rational, and are divided into two groups, II A- consequence and II B- consensus; both employ cognition, reason and thought. According to Hodgkinson, Type II A implies an ideal ethic of professionalism-as-service and the subordination of self-interest in an effort to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number; it is a "higher level' of rationality... (which employs) logical analysis.... The analysis of consequences presupposes a social context and a given scheme of social norms, expectations, and standards" (p.117). Type II B is a utilitarian

Right

**Type I: principles,
or metaphysical**

**Type II A: rational-
(consequences)**

**Type II B: rational-
(consensus)**

Type III: preference



Good

Figure 1: Value Paradigm

From: Administrative philosophy: Values and motivations in administrative life (p.131), by C. Hodgkinson, 1996, Tarrytown, NY: Elsevier Science Ltd.

logic which does not allow for reflection but is occupied with arriving at consensus, the politically possible, by averaging the individual values of the group. With Type II B, the ethic of the group takes precedence on the grounds of consensus "that ultimately can be traced back to individual affect, emotion, or 'feeling'" (p.117). Thus, consensus organization constitutes a working compromise dictated by social convention but it does not follow an ideal ethic.

At first glance this value paradigm may seem rather difficult. However, taken from the point of view which should be adopted by individuals acting in the best interests of others, the paradigm's direction becomes clear. Either extreme may be dismissed as inappropriate for the basis of decisions for a diverse population, while the middle ground is easily recognized as the realm of most public decisions, at least in a liberal democracy. However, for the author the worth of this paradigm is the distinction Hodgkinson makes between Type II A and B values. His notion that, with Type II A, ethics and consequences must be considered in decision making is particularly important if we are to ensure the viability and worthiness of public education, and appeal to the public for their continued support. This value paradigm provides a useful tool for analysis of individuals' and/or group's perspectives and agendas. In particular, it can be utilized to assess the commonalities and differences among the parent participants of this study, and to determine the types of value they represent.

Values in Education

One of the triggers for the author's interest in discovering what values contemporary parents may bring to educational governance was Housego's (1993) summation of Canadian values in education. The author was intrigued to see if these values would be cited by parents in the course of their interviews. Freedom of choice, elitism and competition were grouped together; stating these three have risen in prominence, Housego worried they have endangered the values of equality (or equality of opportunity), community, cooperation, compassion and compromise predominant in Canada over the past seventy-five years. Further, if community values are in decline, then by extension public education is also in jeopardy. Contending the difficulty posed for those involved with educational governance is achieving a proper balance

for those involved with educational governance is achieving a proper balance between choice and equality, this scholar associated the *choice value* with a free market in which individual interests are paramount and there is an assumption the pursuit of private interests will also advance public interests. The *equality value* was defined as concerned with collective interests over individual ones. As Housego noted:

The key to the balance is the necessity for each individual to have a commitment to a moral code made up of a public and private component. The public component has to do with duty to one's neighbor and one's performance of public duty. The private component has to do with the pursuit of private excellence. Individual freedom must be accompanied by this morality if the group, the community, the society, the organization are not to have to revert to authoritarian control to maintain order. The great danger to community interests and the survival of community values is surely the predominance of egoistic individualism refusing to recognize the importance of social and moral responsibilities. (p.8).

This sensibility is shared by the author, yet as value sets are often cyclical it is worthwhile to have them named and debated within public schools and the community. An examination of contemporary parents involved in the governance of their local school will provide insights to values currently at work in public education.

Change as a Process

Change Management

Global changes, discoveries, calamities and triumphs are reported around the world at an unprecedented speed. The pace of change has also increased. Recommending those concerned with public education develop 'change capacity' and view change in a positive light, Fullan (1993) stated, "it is not possible to solve 'the change problem', but we can learn to live with it more proactively and productively" (p.vii). More than producing problem solvers and critical thinkers, Fullan stated the effort to view change as a process which can be managed rather than as an event is of importance as "education has a moral purpose... to make a difference in the lives of students regardless of background, and to help produce citizens who can live and work

continuous innovation are everyday realities for those occupied with meeting the needs of today's students as they are "in the business of *making improvements*, and to make improvements in an ever changing world is to contend with and manage the forces of change on an ongoing basis" (p.4).

Recently, there has been a surge of interest in the pace, multiplicity of influences, and the unpredictability of change which has been termed chaos theory. However, rather than view the increasing influx of influences and information as overwhelming and chaotic, Fullan (1999) suggested a more appropriate label should be complexity theory. Summarizing this phenomenon, he noted:

that the link between cause and effect is difficult to trace, that change (planned and otherwise) unfolds in nonlinear ways, that paradoxes and contradictions abound and that creative solutions arise out of interaction under conditions of uncertainty, diversity and instability. (p.5).

To effect positive changes in students' lives regardless of background, and to increase society's capacity to cope with change, educators are advised to "become skilled change agents with moral purpose" (1993, p.4). In particular, individuals and groups involved with educational governance would benefit from this positive approach when dealing with the barrage of influences, and interactions characteristic of contemporary society.

First and Second Order Changes

According to Fullan (1991), it is possible to detect differences among individuals' or groups sense of efficacy by deciding whether the changes sought in their agenda are first or second order. Fullan stated, "First-order changes are those that improve the efficiency and effectiveness of what is currently done without substantially altering basic organizational features and the way people perform their roles" (p.29). He contended, "second-order changes seek to alter the fundamental ways in which organizations are put together, including new goals, structures, and roles" (p.29). The former changes are initiated within the existing organization, but the latter are far more revolutionary. This differentiation of first or second order changes provides a useful insight into the nature not only of proposed change but of its proponents.

provides a useful insight into the nature not only of proposed change but of its proponents. Further, a key element to an individual's or groups' sense of efficacy is their recognition of the influence or power they wield. Hodgkinson (1996) stated, "power should be viewed as a capacity to bring about an outcome involving interests" (p.29). This capacity for ensuring the prominence of even a minority position's interests makes it important to identify competing agendas, to understand the limitations to agendas, and to discover whether or not the underlying values reflect those of the majority. Such evaluation would assist educational leaders to ensure any actions taken are in keeping with the greater good.

Politics, Power and Influence

Diversity, Equity and Power

Beyond the reality of contemporary complexities requiring effective, even intuitive, change management capacities, Fullan (1999) noted the importance of recognizing the interplay of diversity, equity and power constantly in flux as relationships are developed. This scholar noted, "Diversity means different races, different interest groups, different power bases and basically different lots in life" (p.3). Challenges posed by such diversity can be addressed fairly if the principle of equity is realized. Within the context of education, Caldwell, Smilanich and Spinks (1988) defined equity as "conceived in terms of providing the best opportunity... regardless of personal circumstance" (p.6). Such a definition recognizes that for some individuals and/or groups, extra measures may need to be taken to ensure equitable participation. The existence of power differentials among the various players should not be overlooked. Recognizing the organizational reality of both the field of education and the sub-groups which comprise it, Housego (1993) advised we need "to come to terms with concepts of power, conflict and the values which drive individuals in organized settings" (p.1). Further, he contended "those who are the most powerful have their way with respect to the imposition of values in the group, in the community, in the society, in the organization" (p.7). The most influential individuals are more likely to have their agendas realized than weaker members even of the same group. The

diversity of individuals and groups, and, for the purposes of this research, the wide range of parents in parent committees, should alert us to the breadth of the variety of the influence or power that particular individuals or subsets of individuals can wield in decision making, setting priorities, and directing courses of action.

Limitations on Agendas

Another aspect to influence or power was put forward by Dahl's (1991) contention that there are several key limitations to agendas. This academic stated, "personal agendas are limited by the agendas themselves, by the political, economic, and social structures that generate opportunities for choices and decisions, and by their own awareness of their opportunities for exercising influence in any of these spheres" (p.25). According to Dahl, the first limitation on agendas is the composition of the agenda itself. For example, an individual may be able to select a choice from an agenda yet not have any control over its formation. The second limitation is generally determined by the political, economic and social structures which permit or prohibit various options. In this case, a structure is defined as "a relatively enduring institution, organization, or practice that allocates or significantly influences the allocation of important values like prestige, status, money, wealth, education, health, and others including, of course, power, influence, authority, and the like"(p.24). With this definition the public education system can be viewed as a structure which distributes or allocates these values, and which thus has long term effects on the welfare of both individuals and society. As noted by Hodgkinson (1996) and Fullan (1999), Dahl's third limitation is the way an individual or group perceives the world, and their awareness or consciousness of their influence. For instance, some individuals may not make a phone call which may have produced results as they are not aware, or do not believe, that such a call would be productive. In such a case, Dahl stated, "actual influence is less than potential influence" (p.25). For the purposes of this research, agendas are understood to involve a complex of interest and influence limited by social, political and economic structures, and by individual or collective consciousness of their efficacy.

Although parents' power and influence may be limited, some more than others, the

even though in most provinces parent committees have been limited to the right to advise.

According to Barnard (1938):

The exaggeration in some connections of the power and of meaning of personal choice are vicious roots not merely of misunderstanding but of false and abortive effort. Often, as I see it, action is based on the assumption that individuals have a power of choice which is not, I think, present.... (This does not) deny that the power of choice is of great importance. Though choice may be limited very narrowly at a given moment, the persistence of repeated choices in a given direction may ultimately greatly change the physical, biological, and social factors of human life. To me it is obvious it has done so.
p.15

Thus, gaining a better understanding of parents' agendas is important, since their long-term influence, the 'persistence of repeated choices', should not be underestimated. Indeed, their efforts to increase their voice in school governance has already 'born fruit'.

Influence of Minority Groups

Another issue of concern to the author is the rise of far-right minorities and the spreading influence of their narrow, prescriptive views in Canada, the United States and other Western countries. For instance, Clarke (1995) recently reported democratic governance was identified as a major problem for global corporations. The Trilateralists, a group of international but mainly American corporatists, commissioned a report titled The Crisis of Democracy, which warned in the 1970's that:

Democratic governments had become bogged down by special interest groups, over-emphasis on social welfare programs, a top-heavy public bureaucracy, too much protection for workers in the economy, and too many critics in the media and universities.... The central political problem was what the authors called "an excess of democracy" which, in turn, "means a deficit in governability"
(p.45).

Clarke exposed how this powerful coalition has successfully targeted 'industries' and practices, and developed long-term strategies to effect their goals. Interested in privatizing both Health and Education, in 1997 this group estimated education in Canada to represent a "\$60 billion a year 'market'" (p.159). Obviously, not everyone holds public education as a metavalue. In fact, some

see it as a commodity.

Part of any movement is to develop and spread propaganda with the knowledge that, if something is said often enough and with enough conviction, it may eventually be accepted as a fact. If indeed it is in the interest of elite corporatists for public education to deteriorate, then the metavalue of questioning, rooted in the Socratic tradition, should be roused to ask why, and in whose best interest are such 'reforms'? The development and use of new discourse is integral to supplanting old ideals with new terms and their underlying conceptual framework and values. The language increasingly utilized by public institutions substitutes marketplace words and phrases, or renames existing terminology, to subtly alter the context and shift our ways of thinking; for example, principals become 'managers', and students or parents become 'customers' or 'clients'. The rise of market terminology and its adoption in hospitals and schools indicates how the contextual conditions within these organizations is shifting from public service to consumer driven relations.

Recently, proposed models for the education system have been most often based on business models- the emphasis is on issues of organizational efficiency and effectiveness, not the assessment and achievement of educational goals. In countries such as Australia and Britain where school-based management models have been adopted in the name of democratization, critics have documented the rise of competitive, non-collaborative, marketplace strategies used to woo students, or 'customers', in an effort to bolster decreasing budget allocations from government. (Smyth,1993) This trend has been accompanied by increased centralized control of policy, curricula and resources by government. In addition, critics have documented the corresponding marginalization of socially democratic thinking which had been partially institutionalized within the educational field. Further, they record increasing disparities in the quality of education and the resources received by the have's, the more affluent members of society, and the have-not's, the lower socio-economic members.

With these models, Dewey's (1916) notion that, "social efficiency as an educational purpose should mean cultivation of power to join freely and fully in shared or common activities" is displaced (p.144). Concern for achieving the maximum potential of each student is replaced with concern for the bottom line. Apple (1995) contended:

replaced with concern for the bottom line. Apple (1995) contended:

The neo-liberal emphasis on making the world into a vast supermarket so that everything- even our students- can be bought and sold for profit has spawned a growing movement toward “voucher” and “choice plans”.... it has become even clearer over the past ten years that the ultimate effects of such educational “reforms” will be to create a form of educational apartheid that will be disastrous for the children of the poor and disenfranchised. Furthermore, the pressure to establish even greater centralized control over the ends and means of education through a national curriculum and national testing is- in the guise of accountability and efficiency- apt to weaken the gains that women, people of colour, and others have made in making their curricula and teaching more responsive to their cultures, histories, and daily lives. “Official knowledge” will move backward as the conservative restoration picks up even more speed. (p.xxi)

Here in Canada we might do well to heed Australian education critic, Angus’s (1993) caution that, “the notion of democracy seems to have been reduced to a simplistic concept of parental ‘choice’... [in which] the emphasis is on accountability and control rather than personal empowerment” (p.17). Educational leaders and Canadian citizens cannot afford to maintain the complacency which takes continued universal public education largely for granted. More than education appears to be at stake.

Democracy and Public Education

This notion that public education is linked to the health of our liberal democracy is the final component of the political dimension in the author’s personal paradigm. Dewey (1916) noted the importance of education to the creation of responsible citizenship, and the development of personal efficacy. This scholar recognized public education’s potential to act as a great leveller, removing barriers of race, class, gender, religion among others, which ultimately fosters individual responsibility and a broader understanding of society. Further, recognizing the challenges posed by both time and change, Dewey (1940) contended:

The problem of education in its relation to the direction of social change is all one with the problem of finding out what democracy means in its total range of concrete applications: domestic, international, religious, cultural, economic, and political.... The trouble... is that we have taken democracy for granted: we have thought and acted as if our forefathers had founded it once and for all. We have forgotten that it has to be enacted anew in every generation, in every year, in every day, in the living relations of

negligent in creating a school that should be the constant nurse of democracy. (p.357-358).

The link between public education, democracy, and the health of society's political, economic, and social structures seems clear.

Personal Experiences

The author's personal experience as a parent over the past decade or more, as a member of parent committees, as a student, and as a teacher provided the initial interest in parents' involvement in educational governance. As a past member of both pre-school and elementary school parent committees, the author had been intrigued by the actions and convictions of some individuals who had demonstrated a strong sense of mission and personal efficacy as they attempted to dominate selected issues. However, it was usually the case that an equally strong person was able to present other views and consequences to effect a middle-course for the group. Finding these interactions critical to the ultimate course and welfare of many programs and initiatives, the writer discovered the individual's or group's underlying values were frequently exposed. This value question, hidden below the surface, fascinated the author and eventually led to this investigation in which the detection of these motivating values for parents regarding public education acts as a guiding rationale.

As a person who came late to teaching after a career in private and public administration, parental duties, and a return to university studies, the writer acknowledges the insights and wealth of experiences shared by her colleagues including teachers, school administrators, and professors of education at three universities. The writer's interest in value sets and her concern for the welfare of students and the health of public education, first triggered by the insight and support of a Social Studies professor at York University, has informed much of her studies during ensuing degrees. This interest culminated in the present research endeavour.

After consultation with current colleagues, either teachers or administrators, the author discovered that they were similarly concerned with the challenges of involving parents more closely in school governance, yet maintaining the broader view of acting in the best interests of all students. These colleagues believed many parents do act in the greater interest but all have

had experiences with a few parents only interested in their own limited agenda. No one wanted these individuals to have more power. Teachers also expressed a concern that an increasing number of parents are not only demanding more access to the classroom, but are asking for changes in the learning experiences offered to their children. Many educators believed their professional training, experiences and judgement are too often challenged by parents who perceive themselves as knowledgeable of educational pedagogy, services, curriculum and programs offered to children. Although well-meaning, this knowledge may be often limited in scope, and subjective in nature. Also, many educators are concerned with the increasing demands of parents on their time, energy and patience, and the expectations that parents' requests should be satisfied immediately. As a result, these professionals are particularly worried by the resulting challenge to keep up with the needs of their students and the expectations of the curriculum. However, most colleagues viewed an increase in parental involvement in school affairs as having potential to enrich the school environment but they are concerned with the potential downside as well. Balance, requiring training and open-mindedness, was perceived to be essential for success.

Synopsis of Personal Paradigm

A synopsis of the writer's personal paradigm is provided to assist the reader to understand the basis of the approach used for this investigation. After much reflection, the author was able to identify four principle dimensions which consisted of values; change as a process; politics, power and influence; and personal experience. Each of these dimensions was perceived by the author to affect the way parents and the traditional authority figures interact within the context of educational governance. Furthermore, in the writer's opinion the level of parents' awareness of each of these dimensions affects not only their potential effectiveness but the ultimate quality of public education for students. Both personal and professional experiences have convinced the writer that the influence of each stakeholder in public education should not be underestimated. Educational leaders will continue, in the writer's opinion, to face increased demands by interest groups for participation in school affairs, as well as attempts to share perceived power.

Educational leaders will continue, in the writer's opinion, to face increased demands by interest groups for participation in school affairs, as well as attempts to share perceived power.

The author was particularly interested by the concern expressed in the literature for equity within public education for lower socio-economic students and their parents. Now that parents have been included in educational governance, will those parents who represent this group be dominated by other parent groups? Is there a detectable difference in personal efficacy between parents groups from different socio-economic schools? Are the issues or agendas, and the underlying values similar or not? School District # 61 [Greater Victoria] accommodates many children from of lower socio-economic status families. In fact, Reitsma-Street, Hopper, and Seright (2000) recently reported, "fifteen percent of Victoria's residents are classified as 'poor'... [less than] the 20% reported for BC and the rest of Canada....[yet] more than 47,000 people live with poverty" (, p.55). Furthermore, these scholars noted "of the 8,870 families who are poor in the CRD [Capital Region District], 41% are lone parents with children under 18 [and] 26% are couples with children under 18" (p.85). Thus, sixty-seven percent of poor families have children under eighteen. As pressure for power and influence grows from various stakeholders, will parents from all groups be equally heard? In addition, it is of interest to the author that there is very little said in the literature regarding whether the perspectives and value systems regarding public education are similar or different among parents from different socio-economic groups. If parents are to be truly brought into the realm of educational governance, then it is worthwhile to reach a better understanding of the shared or disparate value sets among them, and to consider whether all groups are well represented.

In summary, of significant concern to the writer is the sense that the present organization of public education, already the subject for debate, is likely facing second order changes to appease demands by various groups. These changes, 'touted' as 'reforms' to appeal to pressure groups, need to be carefully considered if we are to keep the welfare of students and our larger society as the priority. Changes effected in the United States, Australia, Britain and other Western countries are bound to be considered by politicians, corporatists, and other stakeholder groups here in Canada (Clarke,1997; Saul, 1995, 1997). However, the author believes it is essential that changes adopted by other countries are carefully weighed for their suitability to the

be asked and evaluations undertaken to ascertain the short and long-term consequences on students' learning experiences, and resulting opportunities in the larger society. Furthermore, parents should be brought into these decisions and consulted for their opinions. For instance, are many parents aware of the concept of Fullan's (1991) first and second order changes, and if so, to what degree does it affect their agendas or actions? Would the majority of parents prefer first or second order change in public education? To what extent do parents really want increased responsibilities and accountability, together with the demands of increased training and time necessitated by models which require parental presence in school-based management? Or would the majority prefer increased communication and consultation in the decision-making process at the local school level but less overall responsibility? Thus, this interplay of values, the process of change, the reality of politics, power and influence, combined with personal experience have joined together to raise many questions for the author regarding parental involvement in educational governance, and the ultimate welfare of both our students and our society.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

*Research is the ability to investigate systematically and truly
all that comes under your observation in life.*

Marcus Aurelius, 2nd c.

Context

Since the 1960's, parents and their committees have been increasingly legitimized as valuable, contributing members of the educational sphere in many Western countries. While not all parents are able to participate in parent groups or within the school, for those parents who do get involved researchers (Epstein, 1995; Gordon, 1968; Henderson, 1988; Sarason, 1995) have demonstrated a positive relationship is developed for both the parents and their children. Simultaneously, moving beyond concern for their children's academic success, certain groups of parents have become more assertive and better organized to demand more say in the governance of education (Gorton, 1991). A pattern has been established throughout many Western countries in which parents have become increasingly involved in educational governance, particularly since the eighties when many of these countries passed legislation formally recognizing the inclusion of parents in school affairs. More specifically, parents are solicited for school-based activities, as members of parent committees, as volunteers in school programs, and as participants in school-based management.

Inclusive legislation has, in effect, formally recognized parents as the new 'player' in the educational field, and is exposing and involving them in the political dynamics of schooling. Schools are a political entity; schools should be considered "[as] (and must be) *political* institutions" (Mitchell, 1982, p.731). Furthermore, as Dahl (1991) reminds us they are political entities within a larger political system which can be defined as "any persistent pattern of human relationships that involves, to a significant extent, control, influence, power, or authority" (p.4). Small politics at the local level and big politics at the provincial level all must be acknowledged when administering a school. In addition, other forces such as social or economic realities must also be taken into account. Thus, set within this dynamic milieu, this research was designed to

determine how parents are adjusting and interacting in this environment, given they usually have limited or minimal training and/or experience in the field of education.

The trend to adopt educational policies which increasingly legitimize parents and parent associations as influential participants in both educational governance and students' academic achievement, has given rise to new areas for research. Shipman (1985) stated:

It is the way policies are remade as they are implemented that is even more important to researchers....These may bear little resemblance to the action intended because of the actions by those actually doing the job rather than those who made the policy. (p.273)

As noted by Shipman, researchers need to be alert to the potential for policy to be remade by the actions and agendas of parents and other key players as new policies are put into practice. This remaking during and after implementation, not only of the policy but of the original intent, may have either detrimental or beneficial effects. Both Dahl's (1991) theory that personal awareness of the opportunity to exercise influence, and Barnard's (1938) theory that persistence in a given direction have the potential to effect change combine to remind researchers and policy-makers that policies have the potential to take on a life of their own.

Reforms are often devised, approved and attempted as a response to what has become trendy in other countries or jurisdictions. Yet, few reform models can be one-size-fits-all. A comprehensive understanding of the local organization, its purpose and its needs are integral to any innovations' success. Fullan (1999) stated, "If there is anything that is underdeveloped in educational reform, it is the operational knowledge base that should be possessed and continually updated and refined by organizational members"(p.43). Research affords the opportunity to enrich this knowledge base and to contribute to organizational effectiveness. Thus, the primary purpose of this exploratory, qualitative study was to explore parents' perspectives, and underlying values with regards to public education. A secondary purpose is to identify parents' agendas, or what they anticipate accomplishing by becoming active in school governance, and what impact members of Parent Advisory Committee's [PAC's] perceive they have with respect to what happens in their local school. Further purposes include discovering why some parents have been involved for extended periods of time in school governance, and to propose recommendations which will be helpful to the various parties involved in forming

effective, meaningful partnerships with parents in the area of educational governance.

Qualitative Research

A number of approaches to research are available to neophyte researchers such as the author. After reviewing the professional literature and reflective thought to consider the issue under investigation, a qualitative approach was chosen as qualitative research affords the best opportunity to gain insight into the individuals who, taken together, are the organization. Further, because the researcher allows the participant to freely express their views, qualitative research more readily allows the investigator to acknowledge the human element of policy development and implementation. Such an approach also supports the notion that “to know that large-scale reform is a function of social propagation is to know that the large-scale transfer of complex good ideas is almost impossible ‘in the absence of intimate personal contact’” (Fullan, 1999, p.68). From the individual interview, the researcher may gain access or insight into the complexity that is organizational interrelations, and the underlying motivational purposes.

The value of qualitative research was supported by the renowned Canadian scholar Greenfield (1979) who asserted this approach adds depth and richness to the enquiry beyond the scope of the quantitative approach. Greenfield contended beliefs and ideas gathered with qualitative approaches inform the data and lend power to the methodology. Furthermore, if the investigation’s focus is to understand our own experience and that of others, quantitative data is inadequate as the material typically gathered with quantitative research cannot “speak for themselves” (p.177). Hodgkinson (1996) noted, “If truth-seeking is the objective then this complexity must be somehow rendered comprehensible” (p.47). Qualitative methods used by researchers in this task include direct observation, document review, and in-depth interviewing. For instance, this latter method, in-depth interviewing, described by Marshall and Rossman (1995) as “the study of experiences and the ways in which we put them together to develop a worldview”, encourages a purposeful conversation in which the participant’s perspective, not the interviewer’s, unfolds. (p.82) Thus, the author determined qualitative methods constituted the best approach to detect the themes and structures which construct the complexity of values, perspectives and agendas.

A Case Study Approach

Within qualitative research a number of approaches may be selected, namely, biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. These approaches differ “in the diversity of information collected, the unit of study being examined, the extent of field issues, and the intrusiveness of the data collection effort” (Cresswell, 1998, p.135). For the purposes of this research, a case study research approach was chosen as the best method of inquiry for reaching an in-depth understanding of parents’ perspectives and agendas regarding public education. A case study was defined by Creswell as “an exploration of a “bounded system” or a case.... bounded by time and place... involving multiple sources of information rich in context” (p.61). McMillan and Schumacher (1997) elaborated, “Case studies are appropriate for exploratory and discovery-oriented research... [which] are designed to lead to further inquiry” (p.395). Furthermore, Yin (1994) contended, “As a research endeavour, the case study contributes uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena” (p.2). Case studies attempt to note phenomena within given boundaries of place or concept as described by the participants’ meanings of processes and events regardless of multiple social scenes, settings or participants.

Yin (1994) stated two sources of evidence important to a case study are systematic interviewing and direct observation. Interviewing, typically an informal conversation, may be described as “a conversation with a purpose” (Kahn & Cannell, 1957, p.149). During this conversation, the researcher “explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant’s meaning perspective, but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses” (Marshall & Rossman, p.80). Skills required of the researcher to yield good results from an interview are listening, carefully framing questions, gently probing for elaboration, and good interpersonal interaction. The other important source of evidence, observation, “entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviors, and artifacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for study.... [in order to discover] behaviors and the meanings attached to those behaviors” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p.79). In particular, this approach assumes behavior has a purpose which expresses deeper beliefs and values. Case studies also rely on other sources of information to establish a detailed description of the case such as documents which may be “rich in portraying the values and beliefs of participants” (p.85). This description lends itself to “an

analysis of themes or issues and an interpretation or assertions about the case by the researcher” (Cresswell, 1995, p.63). Thus, all three sources contribute to an enriched collection of data for the researcher.

Setting

This research was conducted in the province of British Columbia’s capital city, Victoria. The Capital Regional District of Victoria is separated from the mainland of British Columbia to the north by the Strait of Georgia, and from the United States to the east and south by the Strait of Juan de Fuca (CRD Profile, Spring 1996). (See Figure 2) A popular tourist destination situated on the southernmost tip of Vancouver Island, Victoria is renowned for its mild climate, beautiful gardens, cultural activities, West Coast pace, and easy access to a wide variety of outdoor recreational activities such as golf, sailing, and whale watching. Often referred to as “The Garden City”, Victoria consists of the municipalities of Victoria, Oak Bay, Saanich, View Royal and Esquimalt with an overall population of 326,000 (City of Victoria, 2000). With such a pleasant lifestyle, Victoria is the city of choice for many retired Canadians. Within this region some of the major employers include the British Columbia provincial government, the Capital Health Region, the Department of National Defence, the University of Victoria, School District #61, the Federal government, the education and health sector, retail and wholesale trade, the tourism and hospitality industry, and a growing film and high tech sector. (CRD Fact Sheet, 2000) Due to the demographics, the culture and the physical geography, it is a relatively conservative, isolated place.

School District # 61 (Greater Victoria), the largest school jurisdiction on Vancouver Island, encompasses parts of five municipalities within the Capital Regional District including Victoria, Oak Bay, Saanich, View Royal and Esquimalt. Within this school district, educational services and programs are provided for 22,000 students in 38 elementary schools, 14 secondary schools and five Alternative Education Programs. French Immersion Programs are offered in seven elementary and secondary schools, while five schools operate as Community Schools. The Victoria District employs approximately 1,275 full-time equivalent teachers, and 120 school administrators. While staying abreast of current methodology, the district tends to reflect the somewhat conservative nature of many of the people it serves. As a large percentage of the

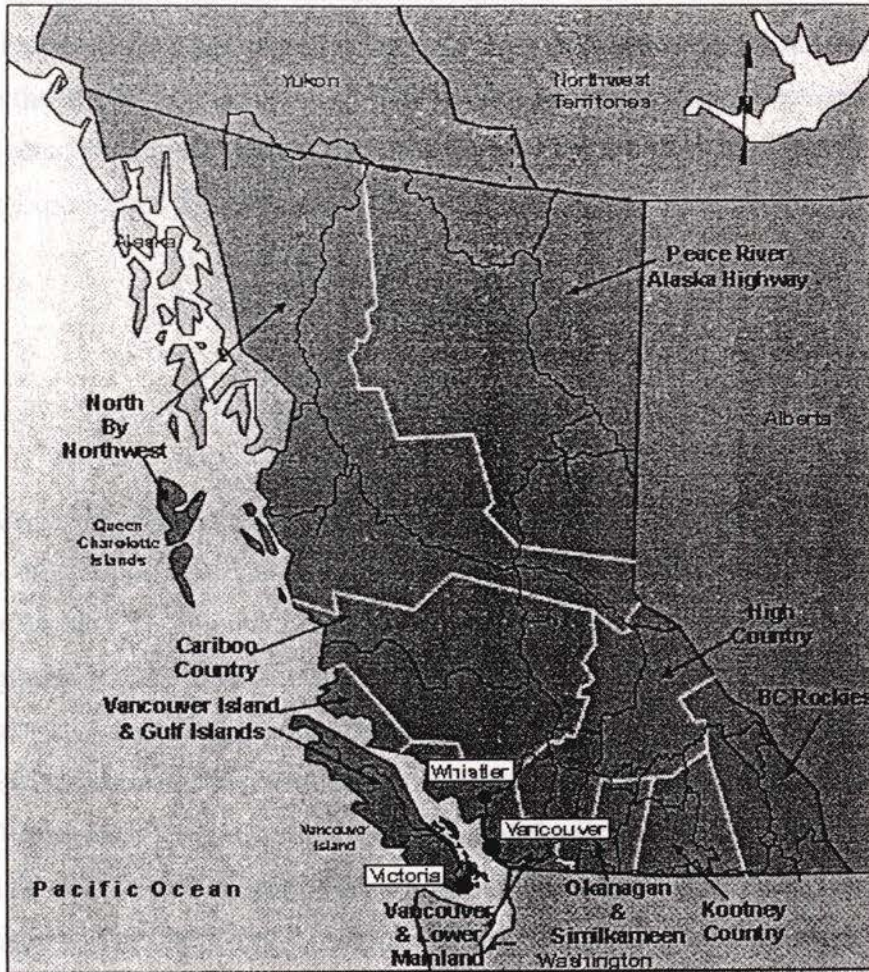


Figure 2: Map of British Columbia, Canada

From World Wide Web.monday.com/tourism/mapmain.htm

district's teachers and administrators will be retiring in the next few years, the personnel profile may differ. Due to financial cutbacks over the past decade, the district has experienced a loss in full-time equivalent teachers, special needs student assistants, and administrators, and reduction in band and strings programs, special education, English as Second Language services, custodian services, and all areas of resource support including classroom texts, library and technology funding. Due to the declining population of school age students, further reductions in provincial funding are expected which will require creative approaches to ensure continued provision of quality learning experiences for all students.

Methodology

Population and Sample

British Columbian parents have had a long history of influencing education, as they reflected the social, economic and political influences of their era. The first Parent Teacher Organization in British Columbia was established under the direction of its first president, Elsie Lorimer, on September 8, 1915 in the oldest school district in the province, Craigflower, located on the outskirts of Victoria. (Barman and Sutherland, 1995) Less than a year later, two parent groups organized and elected officers at Bayview Elementary and King Edward High in the City of Vancouver. Within two years of the establishment of the first parent organization, the Vancouver and District Parent Teacher Federation was formed to address parents' concerns in the greater Vancouver area. By 1922, more than 60 parent associations existed throughout the province, prompting the formation of the British Columbia Parent Teacher Federation.

Once the involvement of parents in school affairs was established, no substantive changes occurred for almost 70 years until the School Act (Statutes of British Columbia, 1989) acknowledged the importance of these stakeholders in the formal schooling of children by officially recognizing the rights of parents to advise on school matters via Parent Advisory Councils. The author believes the proclamation of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982), the Royal Commission on Education in British Columbia (Sullivan, 1988), and developments across Canada and other Western countries were all influential in prompting this political decision. The following year, the British Columbia Parent Teacher Federation changed

its name to the British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC). This umbrella organization encourages each of the province's districts to send representative members from their district PAC. (BCCPAC, 2000) Victoria's district PAC, the Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (VCPAC), is comprised of representatives from the majority of the district's schools' PAC's. (VCPAC, 2000) As Victoria differs from both Lower Mainland urban districts and more rural school districts, the VCPAC and the individual school's PAC's are not necessarily representative of other parent councils around the province.

For the purposes of this research, quota sampling, "described as the non-probability equivalent of stratified sampling" was chosen in order to best "obtain representatives of the various elements of the total population in the proportions in which they occur there" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p.89). The thirty-eight elementary schools in School District #61 (Greater Victoria) were pooled into two groups based on whether or not they received Ministry of Education Inner City Funding for the school year 1999- 2000 according to a list obtained from the district. It is important to note that this funding is re-evaluated every year, and often changes due to shifting needs. For the school year in question, eleven elementary schools received inner-city funding and twenty-seven did not. These schools were put into two lists in order to draw the sample (see Table 3). A proportionate random sample was then pulled consisting of three schools from the former group and seven schools from the latter group to represent approximately 25 percent of the elementary schools. Ten presidents of Parent Advisory Councils were selected as the cases, or units of study, since these individuals had demonstrated interest and commitment in their children's school and, due to their knowledge and experience, were most likely to be a good source for answering the questions of this enquiry. For the purposes of this investigation, parental participation was considered as participation in educational governance, rather than as support for their children's academic progress. Due to many factors, PAC's are not always representative of the school's population, a fact that was noted in the limitations. Consequently, the author acknowledges that the views of these participants may not be those of other parents with children at their schools, nor of other PAC presidents. Further, the writer has noted that many parents interested in council membership are not able to participate due to personal circumstances, but the scope of this study is not large enough to include them.

TABLE 3
Inner City Funded and Non-inner City Funded Elementary Schools

Group	Elementary School
Inner city funded: (n = 11)	Blanshard
	Burnside
	Craigflower
	George Jay
	Hampton
	Lampson
	Macaulay
	Oaklands
	Rockheights
	Tillicum
	Victoria West
Non-inner city funded: (n=27)	Braefoot
	Campus View
	Cloverdale
	Doncaster
	Fairburn
	Frank Hobbs

TABLE 3 (continued)

Inner City Funded and Non-inner City Funded Elementary Schools

Group	Elementary School
Non-inner city funded:	Gordon Head
	Glanford
	Hillcrest
	James Bay
	Lake Hill
	Margaret Jenkins
	Marigold
	McKenzie
	Monterey
	Northridge
	Quadra
	Richmond
	Rogers
	Sir James Douglas
	South Park
	Strawberry Vale
	Sundance
	Torquay
	Uplands
	View Royal
	Willows

Note. Based on the 1999- 2000 Ministry of Education Inner City Funding list of elementary schools for School District #61 (Greater Victoria).

Data Collection

Prior to commencing this study, permission was granted by the University of Victoria's Human Ethics Committee. (See Appendix A) As only parents were the focus of research, no letter of permission was necessary from the school district. President participation for the interviews was solicited with a letter to each of the ten elementary schools' Parent Advisory Councils' presidents. This letter briefly outlined the purpose of the research, and asked each president to volunteer for both an individual, in-depth interview and a small group interview to be held with their peers following the individual interviews. A letter advising principals of this research was also sent to the respective schools as a matter of courtesy. (See Appendix B and C)

After almost two weeks had passed in which no participants volunteered, the researcher distributed twenty-six more letters of invitation to twenty-six of the twenty-eight unsolicited elementary schools' principals and PAC presidents in the inter-school mail. (Two schools were eliminated from the sample at that point due to the researcher's close association.) All letters were placed by the school secretaries in each parent council president's school mailbox; these mailboxes are usually checked more than once a week, but not always. During this same period, the researcher telephoned the school secretaries of the initial ten schools to get the home telephone numbers for the PAC presidents. Three secretaries refused to give out the home numbers due to security sensibilities but left messages for the PAC presidents in their school mailbox. The researcher called the seven parent council presidents at home over the following week. Once they were contacted by telephone, two out of three inner-city funded schools' PAC presidents, and five out of seven non-inner city funded schools' PAC presidents agreed to participate from the initial sample. In addition, one non-inner city funded school' PAC president responded immediately upon receipt of the blanket solicitation by letter. The researcher then randomly selected one more elementary school for both groups to complete the sample, and was fortunate that each freshly contacted president agreed to take part in the study.

The actual interview process took four weeks. The individual interviews were conducted at the participants' convenience over three weeks from mid-May to early June. The researcher met the majority of the participants at a coffee shop of their choice. Three participants were interviewed at their home. In each case the participants selected the location for the interview. Each individual, in-depth interview took one and a half to two hours. The first interview was

intended to establish a rapport between the researcher and the participant, and to ask the research questions. During the individual interviews, it was made clear to participants that the purpose of the study was to uncover and describe their perspectives. This interview was guided by Marshall & Rossman's (1995) statement that an in-depth interview may be described as "a conversation with a purpose... (in which) the participant's perspective on the phenomenon of interest should unfold as the participant views it, not as the researcher views it" (p.80). Parents were asked exploratory questions developed to solicit information about their thoughts, feelings and perceptions regarding both their own and the PAC's roles, values, agendas, sense of efficacy. (See Table 4) Participants' responses were encouraged, and gently probed for clarification and elaboration. The researcher took notes during each interview, and the conversations were audio-taped with the full knowledge and permission of the participants. After each interview, the researcher made a transcription by entering the interview notes into a computer, and by checking the notes carefully against the tape. As soon as the transcription was typed and printed, the researcher delivered copies to the presidents so they could check the accuracy and make changes where necessary. In some cases, due to a lack of time between the individual interview and the group interview, transcriptions were given to the presidents at the follow-up interview and checked at that time.

TABLE 4
Individual Interview Questions

Item	Question
1.	Could you please provide me with an overview with respect to administration and management, including the PAC, at your school? (ie. How does your school operate?)
2.	Why have you been involved for extended periods of time in school governance?
3.	In your opinion why do you think parents become involved in PAC's?
4.	In your opinion, what are parents' agendas for becoming active in school governance? (ie. What do they anticipate they will accomplish?)
5.	In your opinion, what impact do parents perceive they have with respect to what happens in a school?
6.	What is your perspective on more parents' becoming involved in school governance though PAC's?
7.	Do you have any other comments regarding PAC's?
8.	Any additional comments you have are welcome with respect to management and administration of the school.

Once all the individual interviews were completed, group interviews were arranged with participants at their convenience. At the suggestion of the researcher, the smaller group met at a centrally located restaurant for lunch. The larger group met in a classroom for graduate students, similar to a conference room, at the University of Victoria. For this more formal setting the researcher brought light refreshments in an effort to make the classroom surroundings more hospitable. Each president was given the opportunity to review the typed transcriptions of their individual interview from the notes and audio-tapes, and to confirm their original intent, their language, and the descriptions of the participants. Necessary adjustments to the transcriptions were then made. The presidents were given the opportunity to review the original questions, and to add anything that they had thought of since their first interview in order to yield a richer response to the original questions. More than one participant was encouraged to comment on each question in order to provide a possible range of views, or to indicate the strength for a particular point of view. (See Table 5) The group interview lasted two hours in both cases. Again, participants' responses were encouraged, and gently probed for clarification and elaboration. Both group interviews were audio-taped with the full knowledge and permission of the participants. After each group interview, the researcher made a transcription by entering interview notes into a computer, and by carefully checking the notes against the tape.

Thankful these busy parents volunteered both their time and their views, the researcher recognizes the participant's efforts with gratitude and respect. These PAC presidents have demonstrated enthusiasm, depth of thought, commitment and sincerity not only to their children's schools but to this research endeavour.

 Table 5

TABLE 5
Group Interview Questions

Item	Question
1.	What are your personal values regarding public education, and parental involvement in school governance?
2.	In your opinion, what are your shared values regarding public education, and parental involvement in school governance?
3.	Are there any changes you would like to see in the administration and management of schools?
4.	Other comments?

Data Analysis

Participants' responses were collected in a series of interviews, followed by the composition of "open-ended answers to the questions ... [so that] each answer represents an attempt to integrate the available evidence and to converge upon the facts of the matter or their tentative interpretation" (Yin, 1994, p.97). Open-ended questions allow participants to express their experiences and reflections in their own words; the researcher need only interject to ensure all the areas of interest to the research are covered. This approach was utilized to uncover and describe participant's perspectives, and to "run the more welcome risk of gaining valuable insight into whatever it is that we discuss" (Weber, 1986, p.66). Individual in-depth interviews have the potential to yield thoughts and insights by the participants which are beyond the experience or imagination of the researcher.

Data were collected from several different sources to ensure triangulation, as the "use of multiple methods to collect data about a phenomenon can enhance the validity of case study findings" (Gall, Borg & Gall, 1996, p.557). In-depth individual interviews, follow-up group interviews, and documents were examined in order to find continuity with the literature review, and to identify both common and emergent themes from the interviews. Document analysis which involved drawing information from descriptive materials such as legislation, BCCPAC and VCPAC materials, and PAC minutes, newsletters and websites, corroborated and illuminated particular points. Entered regularly into a personal daytimer, notes were made to supplement information regarding participants and their responses, to record contact and interview dates, and to identify possible emerging themes. Data triangulation served to strengthen the study's usefulness and transferability, or generalizability, by permitting readers to refer back to concepts raised in the theoretical or conceptual framework to see how they guided and defined the research's parameters. This process enables readers to determine whether or not they can generalize or transfer this study's findings to other settings. (Marshall and Rossman, 1995).

In order to construct validity multiple sources of evidence such as documentation, interviews, and published literature were examined. To establish internal validity, or credibility, the interviews were recorded on tape and transcribed verbatim. Further, transcripts were checked for accuracy by the participants. Transcripts were then adjusted to match their original intent, to

confirm both the language and descriptions of the setting and participants. In-depth description detailing each individual case's context, combined with the conceptual framework, established the parameters of the study. The data within these boundaries should then be considered valid (Marshall and Rossman, 1995). Dependability issues were addressed with the provision of an audit trail which documented the progression of the research and its findings. Disconfirming evidence was duly noted and recorded. Documentation included the selection of sites and parent committee presidents, the researcher's point of view, controlled by disciplined subjectivity and an awareness of possible cultural bias, the methods of data collection, and the necessary adaptations made possible by the flexibility of qualitative inquiry. Transcriptions, summaries, and other documentation were held in the researcher's private files, and were available to the supervisor to establish face validity. At the completion of the study all audiotapes, transcripts, and letters of consent were destroyed. Ethical considerations involved attaining written permission from each Parent Advisory Council president (See Appendix D); assigning pseudonyms to the participants and their schools to protect identities; keeping audiotapes and transcripts in a secure location to ensure confidentiality; and destroying these records at the close of the study.

Data were carefully analyzed for emergent themes with the personal paradigm serving as a guide for reflective thought. The concepts of all four scholars, Hodgkinson (1996) Fullan (1991), Caldwell, Smilanich and Spinks (1988), and Dahl (1991) while general in nature, assisted the process of analysis. Clarification of participants' values was guided by Hodgkinson's (1996) value paradigm which lends itself to "interpretation, the discovery of meaning and the process of understanding" (p.101). Further, when the data were reviewed with respect to the impact presidents perceive they have on the system, Fullan's (1991) work on the necessity of developing change capacity, and his distinction between first and second order changes, was useful in the examination of the presidents' responses. Caldwell, Smilanich and Spinks' definition of equity as conceived in terms of providing the best opportunities for learning for every student. When examining agendas, Dahl's (1991) work was used as a starting point for understanding parents' agendas, and their reasons for becoming active in educational governance. The researcher noted the frequency and the intensity of the participants' thoughts and comments, and the participants' designation of an issues' importance while completing the matrixes used for within-case and cross-case analysis for the ten participants, and for cross-case

analysis first within, and then among the two categories once the data were aggregated. Salient themes and patterns were identified from this examination, and correspondence and differences between categories noted.

Directives for Future Research

New possibilities and recommendations for future research were suggested from the interviewing process, findings and emergent themes. For instance, this researcher found interviewing the participant's at the location of their choice was quite successful. An hospitable environment helped facilitate reaching a comfort level with each other early on, and set the tone for the interview. Note-taking throughout the interview process proved to be of later use when it was time to transcribe the audio-tapes as they helped corroborate and clarify the tapes. Although sometimes there were delays before it was possible to transcribe the audio-tapes and notes due to personal circumstances, it is preferable to do this straight away. The timely return of their transcripts may have been the reason very little revisions were discovered when the participants reviewed them. Clarification of the purposes was also useful as it provided a matrix for the data analysis, and a framework to check for emerging themes.

The use of qualitative research with a case study approach was preferable to the researcher as individual's values and perspectives can not easily be ascertained with the mostly close-ended questions of quantitative approach. In the opinion of the researcher open-ended questions are more suited for the discovery of others' values and perspectives. If in the future someone wished to conduct quantitative research, it would be advisable to do a small pre-sample of individual interviews possibly using these matrixes to get a sense of the values and perspectives relevant to that population which would then be written into a quantitative format. Otherwise, there is a risk of 'leading the witness' with what is known or imagined by the researcher, even if it is based on the literature.

The author's several years work experience in marketing and public opinion research proved to both an asset and a challenge. Knowledge acquired from this experience proved useful but so many aspects of the research process had been internalized that identification of each incremental step was sometimes overlooked. However, the importance of taking careful notes, dating and identifying collected data and tapes, ensuring participant's comfort, and noting

strength of themes as they emerged saved time, awkwardness, and confusion. Further, when the author had to make judgment calls, revisiting the personal paradigm set out in the conceptual framework was a helpful exercise in the effort to recognize personal biases to ensure impartiality.

Confronting judgment issues is part of doing qualitative research but it sometimes helps to ask others for guidance, recognizing that they too will bring their biases and experiences to bear on the issue. Once the study was completed, the author reflected that in future research endeavours, she would take the difficulty of judgment calls more into consideration for both the analysis and reporting of the data. However, in this instance items which appeared as irregular outcomes, or contrary to the author's views, were duly noted as disconfirming evidence in the findings chapter since they may be worthy of exploration in future studies.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

There are no facts only interpretations.

Nietzsche, 19th c.

(Hodgkinson, 1996, p.101)

The Parent Advisory Council Presidents who participated in this investigation served two distinct groups of schools, namely Inner City Funded Elementary Schools and Non-Inner City Funded Elementary Schools. For purposes of analysis each individual president was considered to be an individual case. Prior to an individual participant's comments being reported, the context of his/her council work was defined. Once individual interviews were examined for the president's perspectives, a collective perspective was obtained for each group to enrich the data. Both within-case analysis and cross-case analysis were completed to enrich the data base and to facilitate a more comprehensive analysis. Documents consisting of government and Parent Advisory Council materials, including legislation, newsletters, websites and pamphlets, were reviewed as a further data source. When these tasks were completed categorical aggregation was employed to seek common, issue-relevant themes. Disconfirming evidence, defined as unexpected themes or outcomes, were noted for consideration..

Individual Perspectives

Inner City Funded Elementary School PAC Presidents

Within Case Analysis

President 1.

Context

President 1 brought her skills as a community worker to her ten year involvement with the Parent Advisory Council, and had also served as representative to the Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils. This was one of the smaller schools in the district with a

population of approximately 160 students. Approximately, eight to ten parents attend monthly meetings. A year previous to this research, the school district had decided to close this school along with three other schools. The parents joined forces to form a Save Our Schools lobby group, and successfully overturned this decision. The fear of school closure continued to linger among many of these individuals. Another significant issue confronting the school according to the PAC president was one third of the school's population were English as Second Language [ESL] students from immigrant and refugee families. Other challenges cited were the many cultural differences among the families, and many parents had low education and/or socio-economic status. This school community appeared to have many positive features including an effective, well-liked principal, well organized and responsive parents, and complete acceptance and tolerance among the ethnically diverse student population.

Perspectives

The principal attended monthly PAC meetings accompanied by guest teachers and/or counsellors who commented on particular areas of interest to the school community. The president noted most discussion and consultation tended to be on an informal basis. Two years previously, the participant observed the parent council had been involved in selecting the principal for the school. According to the president, this administrator and PAC members shared a deep belief in the intrinsic value of children, and an understanding that 'bad' actions may be due to other reasons such as curiosity or naivety. Recently, a formal school accreditation had yielded a very positive assessment which pleased everyone associated with the institution.

President 1 has been involved for several years in parent council activities. This participant stated she had skills and knowledge to offer the school community, and wanted to get certain things accomplished. In her opinion, many parents believed parental involvement in children's schooling was an important responsibility. Some parents, according to this president became involved in school activities because they wanted to accomplish a particular task, wanted to help the community, wanted to be more closely involved in their children's education, and/or wanted to assist their children academically. Alternatively, other parents participated in school governance, she emphasized, as a consequence of a desire for "power, to boss people around and to have their own empire".

This president's perspective on parents' impact on the school was that many parents do

not join Parent Advisory Councils because they do not believe they have an impact in what happens in a school. These individuals viewed consequences of their involvement being limited to contributions to school supplies and activities from fund-raising revenue, good communication with teachers, and the connectivity conveyed to students by some parents' visibility in the school. This situation, according to her, highlighted the need to identify barriers and generate creative solutions to encourage more parents to participate in school governance. In her opinion "part of the problem is many people don't feel empowered. A lot of people don't have a voice; they feel they don't have a right to one." The school, despite these circumstances, was characterized by many positive features such as cultural differences were celebrated, and a good relationship existed between the very committed staff and parents. In conclusion, this president observed the issue of union regulations and the amount of volunteer work permitted in the school was largely dependent on the principal.

President 2.

Context

With a teacher and a principal as her parents, President 2 believed she brought an insider's familiarity with school needs and operations and to her several years of involvement with the Parent Advisory Council. This inner-city school was one of the oldest in the district and served a population of approximately 250 students. Regular PAC attendance usually consisted of 20 parents. According to this president, perceived challenges for the school included the difficulties presented for parental involvement due to a high percentage of families living below the poverty line, 60% of school's families were single parent families, and lack of free time. A perceived strength was the willingness of many parents when requested to assist.

Perspectives

Monthly parent council meetings were attended by the principal, vice-principal and a teacher. Parent Advisory Council members continually worked to encourage more parents to join, and to relay the message they were not a "cliquey" group. An agenda was posted before meetings and a monthly newsletter was published. Informal consultations and a good relationship with the principal had been established over a period of time. The PAC participated in the recent principal selection but also wanted to be involved in the hiring of teachers.

Unable to imagine her extensive involvement any other way, President 2 had been involved in school governance since her first child entered kindergarten. She perceived her involvement as a personal value, and as providing a role model to her children. In her opinion other parents became actively involved with the parent advisory council to recognize the importance of their involvement for their children; to learn first-hand knowledge of the school; to pass on the values of tolerance and acceptance in a diverse community; and to pursue their own concerns. President 2 believed parents became involved in school governance to ensure the best education for their children, to keep expectations high, and to ensure things are done fairly and right.

At this school parents had seen a significant difference in the school due mainly to the money parents had raised to fund teachers' 'wish lists', students' supplies, school equipment, and field trips to enrich educational experiences for all students. Also, many parents saw positive consequences from their provision of special services like the Breakfast Club. Attributed to the establishment of good relationships and dialogue with teachers and administrators, this president reported parents' ideas for class newsletters, and coping with the first day of school were accepted and implemented by the school staff. President 2 supported increased involvement of more parents in school affairs but acknowledged many individuals had other priorities or valued their time at home with their family. Furthermore, this participant did not believe that school governance would change with increased representation of parents. Finally, a good relationship existed between parents and the administration in this school. According to this participant, accreditation had been viewed as a positive process which produced a school growth plan, celebrated school's strengths, and demonstrated the "concerns of a few vocal parents were not an issue for the majority".

President 3.

Context

Teaching experience in both recreation and post-secondary courses equipped this president with insider knowledge of school operations and proved an asset to both his seven years with the Parent Advisory Council and his four years as the Victoria Confederation Parent Advisory Council representative. With a population of approximately 400 students this school was the largest one in the inner-city sample, while the PAC consisted of a small core group.

According to this president, perceived challenges were the unfamiliarity of many parents with how the school system functioned, and educating parents to their potential for influence. The recently completed accreditation process was viewed as a healthy but expensive process. Possible advantage to the school was credited to the presence of a provincial politician's child in the school.

Perspectives

This Parent Advisory Council published a monthly newsletter, and enjoyed a good relationship with administration. The recent school accreditation process was perceived as valuable as it permitted teachers to view parents in a non-confrontational light. Regarding PAC matters, President 3 believed many council members were not knowledgeable about the process. She observed some parents may not become active members of the parent council as they may have been too intimidated by some perceived strong personalities of present members. Further, this president maintained PAC's "involvement in schools is rather limited as an advisory council, and is dependent on the administration, the teachers, and the relationship PAC has with them". Due to government reductions in financial support, the Parent Advisory Council's funds were viewed as providing parents with more control of decision-making, a fact that has upset some teachers as they believed their right to make professional decisions had been usurped.

President 3's extended involvement in school governance was due to his interest in the education system, and as a way to be active in his child's education and the community, to contribute his skills, and to set an example for his child. In his opinion other parents became involved to learn more about the education system; to have a social outlet with other parents; to be involved in their children's education; to bring special skills to the PAC; and/or to promote special activities or interests. Yet, he acknowledged not all parents involved in the school came to PAC meetings. While this participant stated parents' agendas were dependent on the individual, in his view some parents wanted to establish good relations with the staff on behalf of their children, and other parents were only interested in assisting with their own children's class or a particular activity, and further, "many parents do not have a particular interest in [governance]".

Other than the tangible evidence of parents' contributions from fund-raising revenues, this participant's perspective was that most parents do not believe they have very much impact

on what happens within schools. Yet, the PAC encouraged parents to establish positive relationships and an open dialogue with teachers and administrators. President 3 was supportive of increased parental involvement but despite parent council's many efforts, parental involvement had remained unchanged for an extended period of time. In general, as active parent council members resigned from the PAC when their children moved on to secondary school, they were replaced by new parents to the school. Conscious of being one of the few fathers involved in school affairs, this individual was careful in his efforts to work with other parents. Finally, observing a lack of two-way communication between British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, Victoria Confederation Parent Advisory Council and individual school Parent Advisory Councils's, this president stated school PAC's were quite distant from each other. Furthermore, even for parents who do "see the big picture", they do not have time to pursue possible connections.

Collective Perspectives.

All three Parent Advisory Council presidents stated they had a good relationship with the principal of the school they served. The presidents of two schools in which PAC's had recently been involved in principal-selection committees and school accreditation noted most parents had a positive view of their involvement in both processes. While acting as their children's role model was cited by two individuals as reasons for their involvement in school governance for an extended length of time, all three parents stated parental involvement in their children's education was important. Acknowledging some parents involved in the school do not join the PAC, two out of three participants stated other parents became active in parent councils to be involved in their children's education and to promote special activities. Achieving the best possible education for their children was cited as the main agenda for two presidents. In addition, two of them noted some parents joined because they wanted power. Yet parents' surveys collected during the accreditation process demonstrated, "the concerns of a few vocal parents were not an issue for the majority".

Although two presidents stated many parents had not perceived any impact within the school, all three participants maintained parents had a positive effect largely through dialogue with staff, and contributions of fund-raising revenues which funded school supplies, equipment

and activities. All three presidents stated they would like to see more parents to become involved but despite a variety of efforts, they have been unsuccessful. One president noted, "Part of the problem is many people don't feel empowered. A lot of people don't have a voice; they feel they don't have a right to one". However, a participant observed that new parents tended to replace active members as they left as a consequence of their children leaving the school. Finally, two presidents stated a good relationship existed between parents and administration, and the schools and cultural diversity were celebrated.

Non-Inner City Funded Elementary School PAC Presidents

Within Case Analysis

President 4.

Context

President 4's business background in strategic planning and facilitation, together with her Masters in Business Administration, had proved a benefit during her involvement in school governance. Situated in an upper-middle class neighbourhood near the university, this small school had a population of approximately 200 students which usually translated to one class per grade. Recent reductions of primary class size (Kindergarten- Grade 3) created challenges as there was not enough space in the school for all children within the catchment area. Due to these restrictions at the primary level, a perceived long-term challenge was the possibility of reduced funding as student numbers declined. This president noted students forced to go to other schools for primary grades may not return to their local school for Grades 4-7, effectively keeping class size and funding below present levels. Further, this participant stated as a consequence of one additional student being admitted into the school, class size restrictions had recently required the establishment of split primary grades. This requirement was viewed as too restrictive as it did not allow the school's administration and staff to make well-judged exceptions. In addition, simple differences appeared to be more visible due to the homogeneity of the student population, and possibly reduced the development of tolerance. In her opinion, perceived strengths were the cohesiveness of the parents, and the solid support parents gave to the primary grades. According to this president, the prevalence of only one class per grade was viewed by many parents as

positive both academically and socially for the students.

Perspectives

This Parent Advisory Council had a monthly meeting and newsletter. Executive positions were continuous from January to December to provide continuity from one school year to the next. Although this schedule had been adopted to facilitate succession planning, the process had been challenged by the lack of more parents attending PAC meetings or willing to take on an executive role. According to this individual, the parent council had decided not to pay for items they considered were the responsibility of the government such as replacing obsolete texts. However, PAC agreed to purchase other materials to enhance the educational experiences of students such as items on teachers' "wish lists". Wanting to be more than fund-raisers, this participant observed parents "want to have more impact on the culture and the learning environment of the school. They don't want to be the teachers or they would home-school, but they want to be part of the process in a meaningful way."

Stating her extended involvement in school governance gave her a 'window' into the school, President 4 also credited such activity to her belief it benefited her child, permitted her to contribute her skills, and to develop a good relationship with staff. In her opinion, some parents became involved in PAC's because they viewed their participation in broader terms than just a personal concern for their own children. Stating that agendas start with personal values, this participant noted some parents were active in school governance to support their children's learning environment; to ask where funding was allocated; and to lend financial support to special activities and materials. Most parents did not want to feel obligated to fund the essentials much of their money was presently providing. Further, this participant observed some parents were afraid to get too involved in case of repercussions against their children by staff.

Distinguishing between impact and valuable impact, this president noted parents were not always sure the activities and materials supplied by PAC funds were of value. Many of these items were viewed by some parents as the 'icing on the cake'. Furthermore, even when parents believed they had done a good job, they sometimes questioned whether their efforts were recognized. Rather than a culture which accommodates differences, another difficulty perceived by this individual were the alienation caused by the rigidity and separation resulting from different unions and interests active within the school. In consequence, this individual believed

many parents felt they had very little impact. If parents perceived they had more of an influence in school affairs, President 4 stated more of them would likely become involved. Many parents had a wealth of skills and knowledge which could benefit the school as a community if communication was improved. This participant noted another necessary condition for parental involvement was for some personal benefit to fit with the larger, more altruistic benefit.

According to this president, problems with policies, procedures and practices existed within both the Victoria Confederation Parent Advisory Council and the British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils. She suggested VCPAC could benefit from developing a priority structure for issues to save time spent on less important ones. Further, this participant contended BCCPAC's policies entitling members to come from local school PAC's rather than district PAC's caused over-representation of the Metropolitan Vancouver region. Time management was perceived by this president to be a pervasive problem existing at all levels of parent councils due to occasional "'wing-nuts' that consume a lot of energy with issues that should be set aside". However, with regards to her local school, this president noted a resourceful administration was good at finding both extra funds and solutions in spite of restrictions. Finally, she recommended the school accreditation process should be redesigned to reflect the differences in elementary and secondary schools.

President 5.

Context

Her expertise as a social worker has been an asset for President 5's nine years of involvement in school governance. This relatively small school of approximately 210 students subscribed to a model in which parental involvement was required from all parents, although this involvement is enacted differently by each parent. School culture and practices reflected the underlying philosophy that parents and educators were partners with the shared goal of enriching educational experiences and outcomes for each individual students. At least 30 parents attended PAC meetings every month, while many of the other parents participated in Family Night meetings held every two months. Fulfilment of accreditation goals devised in 1996, such as increasing the effectiveness of support for students with special needs, were viewed by this president as a continual challenge. Perceived strengths were the high degree of parental involvement in the school, and their successful collaboration with administrators and teachers.

Perspectives

The PAC met at monthly meetings, as well as published the agenda and a monthly newsletter. Not only were parents' concerns addressed collaboratively with staff, but a parent representative was on the selection committee for new principals and teachers. In addition to informal meetings, the president met the principal at regularly scheduled times to develop a joint agenda for PAC meetings. Parents' special skills were listed for each class as potential resources for enriching the learning environment. Special efforts were made by PAC members and administrators to recognize contributions of all parents and staff throughout the year. The parent council's funds supported items such as teachers' 'wish lists', student activities and supplies, library resources and internet hook-ups. The PAC viewed one of its major roles as communication and collaboration with administrators, teachers and support staff in order to nurture a climate conducive to learning.

In addition to deriving enjoyment from her relationship with staff and other parents at this community-oriented school, President 5 credited her several year involvement with the PAC to her desire to be aware of the school's dynamics and complexity, to have a direct role, and to act as an advocate for the school in the district. Many parents, according to this president, became active in PAC's to be involved in their children's education, to address a particular issue, to act as a role model for their children, and to ensure fund-raising money goes to the children. This participant stated many parents wanted to have a voice in decision-making. Other parental agendas included creating a safe environment for children, developing an adult community, celebrating children's learning, and most importantly, developing a deeper understanding of their children's education.

Stating PAC meetings were a forum for bringing issues forward for discussion, this president believed parents had an impact in this school as their concerns were acknowledged and addressed by administration and teachers. This process was aided by good communication between parents and the principal. In addition, parents helped determine where PAC funds were spent, and teachers utilized parents' individual skills to enhance the curriculum in the classroom. As parents were considered by her to be thoroughly immersed in the school, this president observed the only place for increased involvement was on the parent council executive.

Finally, President 5 noted critical elements for parental involvement in school governance were a good relationship with the principal which established the tone for positive

relations between teachers and parents; respect for parents and their contributions; two-way communication with the principal and administration; and a shift in teachers' attitudes to view parents as a resource. Furthermore, this participant stated in order to build a strong school community and to demonstrate everyone was working together for the same purpose, it was equally important for parents to show their respect and support for staff, students and other parents.

President 6

Context

This president, whose child was in the Primary Grades, brought his knowledge of economics to his relatively recent involvement with the Parent Advisory Council. Situated in a middle-class neighbourhood, this dual-track French and English school had a population of approximately 440 students with a PAC of approximately 30 parents representing 10% of the families. Strengths were cited as the principal's collaborative style with parents, and the perception the principal was one of the best in the district. According to this president, the principal had been at the school for three years, and was viewed as very proactive regarding the establishment of an enriched learning environment for students.

Perspectives

Viewed as a forum for representing parents' interests, the PAC met monthly, published a monthly newsletter, had a website, and communicated regularly via the internet. Elections for executive members were held in January for better transition in the new school year every September. Given veto power by the Parent Advisory Council's constitution, the principal recently had to use her veto power to make a final decision on a divisive issue. This participant valued the good communication between the parent council and the principal. Parents were active with fund-raising, school programs like Call-Back in which parents telephoned parents of children reported absent to ensure their safety, and mirror committees which examined the same issues being addressed by teachers.

Involved since his child began Primary Grades, President 6 believed parents should be involved in their children's education and the community. When commenting on parents' contributions to education, he mentioned many of them became involved in PAC's as they had

genuine concerns about the state of education in the district and the province. As a consequence of this concern, many parents believed they had something to contribute to education. Due to a scarcity of financial support for provincial education, this participant believed many parents had to be involved in fund-raising, hiring of teachers and the operations of schools like they were in the 19th century. In addition, he observed through this participation, parents would be providing their children a better quality of education. This president noted some parents seemed to receive personal satisfaction from collaborating with other parents, while some parents become active in school affairs to further a specific cause. Contending the PAC “coalesces around excellence in education”, this participant suggested many parents' see their accomplishments in practical terms through the purchases made with fund-raising revenues. Other accomplishments included parents' efforts to enhance communication; to act as conduits for information, ideas, debates, and perceived needs; and to model good conflict resolution skills for their children.

When distinguishing between parents who were involved and parents who were not members of the PAC, this participant observed the former perceived “they can get things done”. Due to personal reasons, some parents were unable to be involved in school affairs. Other parents, according to this president, were sceptical of organized groups and preferred to communicate one-to-one with the principal or district superintendent. President 6 noted, given the many demands on parents' time, it was difficult to get more parents on the council. To address this issue, he maintained that the president had to act like a conductor by matching people to their interests, praising their efforts, and always thanking them. This participant believed the '20-20-60' rule applied in encouraging more parents to become actively involved in the school and council. More specifically, he stated, “20% will do something whether it's organized or not; 20 % will never do anything; and 60% will go in and out of involvement”.

Often, according to this president, parent councils were requested to provide money to purchase items perceived by parents as essential for a school, rather than the incidentals they used to fund in the past. He believed that fund-raising activities were going to be increasingly important as student numbers and funding decline over the next few years. When commenting on the advocacy of PAC's for children's education, he noted parents' efforts to support the Elementary Strings Program had not been very successful because the School Board could only allocate 8% of the budget for discretionary funding. President 6 believed assessments should be initiated to determine what is really needed in schools, to investigate other schools' programs

like intramural sports, to discuss teacher evaluations, and to look at other models of governance such as school-based management.

President 7.

Context

President 7 brought her organization skills, and knowledge of Special Needs Students and English to her four year involvement with the Parent Advisory Council. Situated on the northwest outskirts of the city, this school had a population of approximately 350 students. This PAC consisted of 12-18 parents. According to the president, one of the most significant challenges was to alter many parents' view that school was a full-time daycare facility. Another important issue was the replacement of the many long-time PAC members who would be discontinuing their services when their children graduated in June. In her opinion, actively involved parents had demonstrated outstanding commitment, and had been of substantive benefit to the school.

Perspectives

The long-time PAC published weekly newsletters and a monthly agenda prior to meetings to encourage parents to attend, and to provide professional staff with an awareness of parent council activities. The principal, vice-principal and a primary teacher attended PAC meetings as representatives of the professional educators, and to acquaint parents with current school issues. Council members corresponded regularly with each other and the principal by email. Executive members volunteered for executive positions which functioned from January to December to provide continuity. Parents served on various committees, and actively raised funds which were used to purchase school equipment, support student activities, and address teachers' 'wish lists'. According to this president, some parents did not volunteer to become members of the parent council because they were uncomfortable with political interactions. Other parents found PAC meetings boring, had insufficient time, and/or considered themselves to have limited opportunity to influence the decisions of long-time members.

Involved in school governance since her child first entered kindergarten, President 7 attributed her work in this area to the belief it is important for parents to be involved in their children's education, to act as a role model for children, to learn what is going on in the school,

and to know the people active in the school community. Since she worked full-time during the day, her PAC involvement gave her an opportunity to know what was going on in the school and to meet other people in the school community. Furthermore, she enjoyed the dynamics of the meetings. This participant stated other parents became involved in PAC's as they enjoyed meeting people, and welcomed opportunities to be involved in school affairs. If PAC's were to be made more effective and representative of the parent community, then procedures, according to this president, needed to be less formal and more open to discussion. Also, she emphasized that parents should be "active in governing the school and to be involved from top to bottom, for example, with hiring teachers". For parents, in her opinion, participation in school governance was limited to being involved in the development of the School Growth Plan which emerged from a recent school accreditation. Further, this president noted that at the local school level there may be only one man, but at the Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils and the British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, at least 50% of the participants were men "because it's political, there's more power involved".

Acknowledging it was difficult to speak for others, in her opinion parents had attributes and experiences which they could offer to the school, but opportunities for this kind of involvement were perceived to be very scarce. The principal was acknowledged as significantly influencing the climate of the school, and school affairs. At this institution she noted parents were only encouraged to obtain additional revenues for the school, and to serve as drivers for special events. To the best of her knowledge, parents did not set any policies. Due to shortages in funding, such as the School Board's limited budget, this president reported parents too often disagreed how funds should be allocated. She believed if parents were better organized they would become a significant political force that no government could ignore. Yet, for many parents "when it is time to get more involved, it's like a divorced parent giving their children toys but not real attention". A voucher system might, according to this participant, provide parents with more choice, however she recognized that such a system may create greater disparities among schools. President 7 stated more parents might become involved in school governance if council were perceived to be more democratic, more fun and less formal. Furthermore, opportunities to provide feed-back from parents with regards to school activities would capture some people's interests and perhaps encourage them to become involved in the parent council.

This participant noted research on parental involvement from involved parents', superintendents' or principals' viewpoints would be interesting. Since parents had their children's best interests at heart, in her opinion they should be granted more power in the administration of a school. However, she also noted too many parents viewed school as a full-time daycare facility rather than as a centre of learning where such things as communication, social skills, organization of information, research skills, discipline, and flexibility were acquired.

President 8.

Context

Her advocacy and knowledge for Special Needs Students' Programs both at this school and her child's last school were viewed as an asset to her several year involvement with Parent Advisory Council. This medium sized council was composed mostly of new members. With a population of approximately 175 students, declining enrollment numbers were attributed to several years of climbing real estate values in this middle-class neighbourhood which made the area increasingly too expensive for many families with young children. This reduction in student numbers was accompanied by a corresponding reduction in school funding. A further challenge was the parents' mixed opinions regarding the principal. However, this president suggested, "parents should go in with the attitude that this is teamwork instead of demanding what you want". When commenting on the assets of the school, this president identified the principal's Special Needs background, school community-building programs, the generally well-behaved students, and the presence of a Special Needs Program for students with learning disabilities and/or behaviour problems.

Perspectives

Monthly PAC meetings were attended by the principal, vice-principal and sometimes by a teacher representative; the principal and vice-principal were also occasionally invited to discuss particular issues relevant to the school community. Once a month, the PAC president and the principal had a formal meeting to discuss school affairs. At some meetings, the principal submitted a 'wish list' to the council for review and consideration. After appropriate discussions, priorities were established and a number of purchases were approved as funds permitted.

President 8 became involved in school governance because she had accepted an invitation to become a member due to her belief in the importance of parental involvement in children's education. As a consequence of her activities in school affairs, she believed her child had been given more consideration by the staff. In her opinion, many parents became involved in PAC's to know the staff, and because many parents shared her belief that they could be of benefit to the school. However, some parents wanted more control over what happens in the school. To generalize different parents' agendas for becoming active in school governance was difficult. However, many parents hoped to effect how staff perceived them and their children, and to gain staff support for their special interests. The power and influence of the principal was acknowledged as quite significant by determining which committees were needed. Parents then decided whether they would proceed. This individual maintained parents' main focus was to fund-raise to ensure their school was 'up to par' with technology and other supplies such as art materials, science kits, library books and textbooks necessary for their children's education.

Parents involved in school affairs often perceived, according to this participant, they had more impact in the school than those who were not active members. President 8 contended even involved parents sometimes perceived "they were just bashing their head against the wall" due to government and union regulations, and funding shortfalls. However, this individual noted the Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils' and the British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils' parents seemed to have more influence in decision-making, were equipped with better knowledge of regulations and funding sources, and were better able to act as advocates for parents' concerns. Noting "most parents do not see as big a picture as the administration", this participant maintained parents should become better informed before they become more involved with school governance. While acknowledging the frustration experienced by many parents, she thought they were essentially concerned with personal needs rather than the broader needs of the school community. Further, this president suggested socio-economic barriers might exist for parents with children in low-income neighbourhood schools.

Finally, as a consequence of government's fiscal restraints, this individual perceived parents would have to continue to act as fund-raisers for the foreseeable future, yet many would prefer not to be assigned this responsibility. Noting the principal set the tone for parental involvement, this individual emphasized parents should understand the principal was responsible for the welfare of all students. However, she observed a number of parents were dissatisfied with

certain teachers, frustrated by some personnel practices and union regulations, and wanted to have more input in the hiring of staff. Distinguishing between advice versus power, this president perceived that parents had more power and influence at school district, provincial and national levels.

President 9.

Context

This president's background as a teacher proved useful during her several years of involvement with the Parent Advisory Council. Centrally located, this large school had a population of approximately 500 students and families who were described as 50% low income and 50% middle-class. Noting the very small size of this school's parent council which consisted of a small core of long-time members, this PAC was faced with the dual challenge of losing many members at the end of the present school year, and providing continuity for new members. In addition, the principal's perceived lack of support and collaboration with parents to enrich programs and educational experiences for all students was cited as the reason some parents were moving their children to other schools. This president expressed many parents' hope that the new principal selected for the coming school year would establish a better learning environment for students.

Perspectives

Monthly PAC meetings were attended by the principal and occasionally by the vice-principal or teachers. During the school year, September to June, PAC executives only held meetings if an urgent issue needed to be addressed. In general, this president stated the parent council's main contribution to the school community was made through funds they contributed to support the hiring of crossing-guards and acquisition of supplies. According to this president, many parents expressed frustration with the ineffective communication and perceived lack of support from the present principal. However, the parent council's recent participation in the principal selection process was viewed positively, since this was the first time many of them had participated in personnel matters. The recent loss of the Parent Room due to reductions in custodial services was perceived by many parents to reduce parental effectiveness and teacher-parent communication, and to deprive parents of the necessary space to operate beneficial

programs such as the Parent and Tot Program, and the After-school Program.

President 9 attributed her extended involvement in school governance to her sense of responsibility as a parent, the fact that only a few individuals were actively involved in school affairs, and her belief parents should be involved in their children's education. In her opinion other parents joined PAC's to be part of school activities, to gain knowledge of school dynamics beyond their children's classrooms, to enjoy camaraderie, and to do something good for the community. This participant perceived many members of the council wanted to have a voice in the school and have input in personnel matters such as hiring and removing teachers. At that moment in time, she reported many parents felt powerless, and considered the council as ineffective.

Despite feeling unwelcome in the school, the president observed parents sometimes perceived they had a positive impact through purchases made from fund-raising revenues, dialogue with administration regarding items wanted for the school, input on some school policies, and the operation of school programs such as the Breakfast Club, and Call-back Program. However, parents' time and efforts were perceived to be inadequately recognized by the staff at this school.

In President 9's opinion, "PAC's have been used as fund-raising resources". This participant believed that PAC's could be very effective as a liaison group for administrators, teachers and parents for addressing concerns, but acknowledged that such interactions often required substantial time, knowledge and energy on the part of parents. According to this participant, many frustrated parents were removing their children from this school due to the perceived "dumbing down" of the educational experiences for all students. The administration's perceived reluctance to allocate revenues from parents' fund-raising activities to class activities such as field trips, indirectly assisting low income students who might otherwise not be able to afford to participate, was criticized by this participant and was considered philosophically inappropriate.

President 10.

Context

An understanding of school operations acquired from her employment with the school district proved to be an asset for President 10's several years as a member of the Parent Advisory

Council. Situated in a middle-class neighbourhood in the northern section of the city, this school had a population of 350 students, including an growing number of minority groups. Facing the upcoming loss of many of its 8-12 regular members, and conscious that they may appear as a clique, this PAC was actively trying to encourage more parents to be involved in school governance specifically, and school affairs generally. Other challenges perceived by parents were the contractual obligations and regulations with unions which were viewed as “tying administrators' hands”. Strengths, according to this president, were perceived to be the large majority of well-behaved students, and the school's general stability credited to the fact teachers, present PAC members, and the principal had been there for many years.

Perspectives

Monthly PAC meetings were attended by the principal, vice-principal and a teacher-liaison in addition to a variety of guest speakers invited to give parents a clearer picture of educational issues and challenges within the classroom. A PAC newsletter was published once per month to keep parents informed of parent council activities and to generate more interest among parents in becoming involved with school affairs. The PAC president and vice-president met twice monthly with the principal to discuss current issues and to ensure parents' concerns regarding a variety of school matters were addressed prior to the next council meeting. This president perceived her role was providing parents with “a voice about the small things [parents] can change”.

Active for several years, President 10 stated she had presumed when your child went to kindergarten, parents went to PAC meetings. She credited her several years of involvement with the parent council to her desire to gain a better understanding of the school's dynamics and educational activities, and to her belief in being involved in her children's education. Noting many parents were available to help but did not want to be part of the more formal process, this participant maintained other involved parents wanted to be better informed, to increase their knowledge of the school community and its approach to education, and/or to enrich or change things within the school. Regarding parents' possible agendas, this participant perceived many parents did not feel they could affect much change in the school. However, she recommended that more parents should become active in school governance in order to be better informed, to have better communication with staff, and to acquire and pass on information to other parents.

This president reported that the general perception among parents in her school was that teachers had a great deal of power. Due to this circumstance, many parents perceived that establishing a climate in which their contributions would be recognized and welcomed was a challenge. Although she perceived parents had minimal impact in this school, this individual noted parents' control of fund-raising revenues enabled them to make small steps such as gaining staff's support for some parents' to exercise their particular expertise in school affairs. With regards to more parental involvement in school affairs, President 10 observed PAC's numerous efforts to interest more parents had been largely unsuccessful. She maintained that some parents may not want to participate as they perceived PAC's were political, or would require too much time. In conclusion, this participant stated she respected school administrators and their work, and she believed in the process in which parents were provided a voice in educational affairs.

Collective Perspectives.

All seven Parent Advisory Committee presidents stated parents contributed to the operations of their school by providing fund-raising revenues for school equipment, and student supplies and activities such as field trips, and by volunteering their time and skills to programs or classroom activities. While two participants noted ineffective communication with the principal, three others stated parents believed there was good communication and a good relationship with the principal. Two individuals observed some parents disliked the principal or experienced a high level of frustration with school administration, while three noted their principals were well-liked by parents. One participant maintained that a president's main role was the development of communication and collaboration with administration and teachers, and three of them stated the president's key role was representing parents' interests by giving them a voice.

Consensus seemed to exist among all the presidents that the reason for their extended involvement in school governance was due to their belief in the importance of parents participation in their children's education. Three participants stated they assumed becoming involved in school affairs was something all parents did as soon as their children entered school. Two individuals mentioned their participation was a way to contribute their skills, and to support

their children's education, while three of them stated it was a way to meet the staff and to increase their understanding of contemporary education. Attributing these same reasons to other parents' involvement in PAC's, three presidents maintained parents believed they could contribute to the schools and children's education. When making additional comments, two participants noted some parents' reasons for involvement included they had genuine concerns about education, they liked to be involved, and they liked to be better informed regarding what happened in schools. One president observed some parents wanted more control in school affairs, while another president noted some parents were too afraid to get involved in school affairs in case there were repercussions to their children.

Supporting children's learning environment was declared by three individuals as parents' main agenda for becoming active in school governance. Fundraising to enhance their children's education, according to three presidents, was the main focus of most parents' time and efforts. However, two presidents wanted to shift the emphasis away from fund-raising. Other desired accomplishments mentioned by two individuals were to have an increased voice in decision-making, and to have a better understanding of the dynamics and complexities of a school. One president believed a correspondence existed between the significantly higher incidence of men involved in the Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils and the British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils, with the perception of increased influence and power available in those levels of the organization. Two individuals perceived that a number of parents did not become involved in PAC's because they considered them to be ineffective.

Four presidents reported parents generally have minimal impact in a school, and two of them believed parents' work was not adequately recognized. However, three participants maintained many parents did notice the tangible items purchased with funds acquired by their efforts. One participant equated parents' funds with power to effect at least small changes. Due to government and union regulations, three individuals perceived that much of what happened in a school was beyond parents' control. Two individuals suspected some teachers were resistant to any kind of parental involvement in a school. Furthermore, lack of government funds was perceived by some presidents as dividing parents into diverse interest groups which weakened the potency of parents' political force.

Among these presidents, three maintained that parental involvement in school governance, through Parent Advisory Council's, was a good idea. However, three of them noted a variety of efforts to increase parental involvement had been largely unsuccessful. Continuity of parent council membership due to parents resigning when their children graduated, according to two presidents, was becoming an important issue. This situation was aggravated in the opinion of two participants, by the fact that the time commitments were too demanding for some parents. While two participants contended parents needed PAC's as a place to voice their concerns, two participants considered even involved parents often do not see beyond the needs of their children to consider the larger picture. Overall, one president believed parental involvement would remain at similar levels due to the '20-20-60' rule, namely, "20% will do something whether it's organized or not; 20 % will never do anything; and 60% will go in and out of involvement". Concurring that many parents would not become involved in educational governance, another president emphasized, "There's nothing worse than having vision, and trying to lead the cattle to water".

Additional comments by presidents regarding the administration and management off the school were largely situation specific. Exceptions to this circumstance were comments made by two participants who observed the principal established the school climate, and two participants who identified the need for good communication with administration was very important. Individually, presidents made a number of personal responses, namely, that some PAC's did not feel supported by administration; parents had children's best interests at heart; most parents needed to understand the principal was acting on behalf of all students; the president respected administrators' tough job; many parents viewed school as a full-time daycare facility rather than an educational one; there is a need to review our education system; education was better in the old days when schools were self-governing and parents had more input in school governance; administration was good at finding funds and being flexible; and the school accreditation process should be designed separately for elementary and secondary schools.

Inner City Funded & Non-funded Elementary School PAC Presidents

Cross Case Analysis

Presidents' Aggregate Thoughts.

All ten presidents perceived that parents had a positive impact on schools due to their contributions of fund-raising revenues, while two presidents stressed that they would prefer to devote less time and energy to fund-raising. A belief in being involved with their children's education was explicitly cited by eight participants, and implied by two others, as the reason for their extended involvement in school governance. Indicating the significance of their relationship with the school principal, six out of ten individuals stated they valued a good working relationship with the school principal. However, two individuals observed many parents experienced a high level of frustration with school administration. When commenting on the quality of the dialogue maintained between principals and parents, five presidents noted their communication was effective, and two presidents perceived communication with the principal was poor. Six participants reported parents generally believed they had minimal impact in the school. However, many parents had noticed the tangible evidence of fund-raising efforts.

Emergent Issues.

As a consequence of this analysis, several common perspectives emerged which were expressed by a minimum of 60% of the participants, namely:

Perspective 1

Parents believed fund-raising contributions had a positive impact on the school community and their children's educational experiences.

Perspective 2

Participants believed it was important to be involved with their children's education.

Perspective 3

Presidents valued a positive relationship with the school principal.

Perspective 4

Individuals valued good communication with the school principal.

Perspective 5

Parents, in general, perceived they had minimal impact on what happened in the school beyond the contributions they made through fund-raising.

Group Perspectives

Inner City Funded Elementary School Group

Within Case Analysis

Presidents' Perspectives.

Affording the three PAC presidents, from the funded inner city elementary schools, the opportunity to meet fellow parents and council members with similar concerns and interests, the follow-up group meeting produced some interesting and informative discussions. Enriched data were obtained in three areas: personal values, shared perspectives regarding parental involvement in school governance and public education, and suggestions for the administration and management of schools. Areas of consensus and individual comments were studied and recorded. Analysis of group discussions focussed on the consensus areas of the participants. The importance of issues were indicated by the amount of time, attention and comments given to a particular topic.

Personal Values

All three presidents cited the importance of a process within schools for parents to exchange ideas, problem-solve and develop initiatives with administration. Stating there should be acceptance of all people no matter their ability, ethnicity, or beliefs, these individuals maintained that some important values which could be developed within the school were children's self-worth, tolerance and respect. According to one participant, the identification and recognition of the many barriers teachers, students and parents faced was also necessary to the development of tolerance and respect for all individuals within the school community. One individual believed administrators and educators should recognize that parents had many skills and experiences which could be used as resources within the school. Further, accountability on

the part of all those involved in public education, including school staff, trustees and the public, was emphasized by one participant.

Shared Perspectives

Comments which received general consensus by the participants throughout the interview were regarded as shared perspectives. Discussions between the three presidents revealed they held certain values in common regarding parental involvement in educational governance and the philosophies of public education. Shared by participants was that involvement in their children's education and school affairs was part of parents' job to ensure quality education for students. These individuals contended that school cultures which welcomed parents benefited everyone. Further, these participants noted some parents became involved in the school and/or the PAC not out of a concern for education, but because they wanted to be of help either in a general way, or to give their support to resolving a specific problem. In their view, common objectives valued by many parents were the creation of a warm, welcoming community, the provision of expectations and guidance for their children, and the development of children's understanding of social boundaries. According to these presidents, some parents may not perceive they could have an effect on education which prevented them from becoming actively involved in schools. Finally, all participants reported some parents were involved in school affairs due to specific interests such as music.

Suggestions

Consensus areas were detected by the number of comments, and the amount of consideration and time given to the various topics of interest to the participants. Based on personal observations and experiences associated with school governance, these inner city school PAC presidents suggested a number of practices which many parents would appreciate being changed or addressed by administrators at the school, district, provincial and federal levels of the education system. Significantly, six comments centred around perceived insufficient funds. Reductions in funding for Special Needs, and English as Second Language students, and Student Assistant employees, were perceived to have negative effects on all students. Furthermore, these participants maintained that private schools should not receive public money. Of equal importance, six comments about the effectiveness of trustees were noted, namely,

parents needed more support from trustees, and district trustees needed to articulate a vision, increase their visibility, and establish more contact with school personnel and PAC presidents. These participants observed one of the most significant challenges faced by administration was the recruitment and training vice-principals. Furthermore, five of them acknowledged the heavy workload and conflicting responsibilities inherent to the vice-principal's dual role of teacher and administrator. Consequently, many educators were reluctant to occupy that position. The involvement of the federal government in public schooling, according to these presidents, should focus providing a vision, identifying common goals for education, and ensuring a realistic level of funding. These parents believed, as a nation, we have a responsibility to educate our children as they will determine the shape of society's future well-being. Administration of local schools received three mentions. More specifically, there was a perceived need for greater exchanges of values, and improved communication. Further, these presidents maintained that principals' mandatory five year terms should be made more flexible. Participants proposed several suggestions for consideration by the province's Ministry of Education, including senior staff in the ministry should have their children in public school to reflect their commitment to public education, and the Minister of Education needed to be both knowledgeable of education, and perceived as an advocate for excellence in education. Home-schooling was commented upon by two participants who reported that children taught at home can complete in half a day what is normally accomplished at school in a whole day, and social interactions for these students were not an issue in larger communities as parents organized group outings. A final concern for public education was the observation many parents were removing their children which in turn "pulls down the level of public school".

Non-Inner City Funded Elementary School Group

Within Case Analysis

Presidents' Perspectives.

Seven PAC presidents from the non-funded elementary schools were given the opportunity to meet fellow parents with similar concerns and interests at the follow-up group meeting. Enriched data were provided from the interesting and informative discussion in three

areas: personal and shared values regarding parental involvement in school governance and public education, and suggestions for the administration and management of schools. Areas of consensus and individual comments were both noted. The importance of issues to participants were indicated by the amount of time, attention and comment given to a particular topic.

Personal Values

Five out of seven presidents cited access to education was a fundamental right as a personal value. Two presidents added education enabled individuals to fulfill their potential and to function in the community; one of these presidents stated, "I would not have gone to university without public education and student loans". According to four participants, these presidents believed they were advocates for all children, and maintained parents had a right to be involved in the culture and direction of the school. Several comments were made twice by this group, namely, parents were ultimately responsible for their children's education; education should be about how to learn; education was about learning citizenship and civility; school staff should respect parents' knowledge and skills; parental involvement created a safer educational community; and parents had little real involvement in educational governance. A number of personal values commented upon by various individuals included, the three 'R's were a necessary part of education; parents felt forced to replace funding reductions by governments; PAC's ensured parents concerns were addressed; diversity should be respected; each child's unique abilities should be celebrated; committed teachers should be recognized; and education should be a partnership.

Shared Perspectives

Only those comments which received general consensus by the presidents throughout the interview were noted. Analysis of the discussion revealed the seven presidents shared certain observations and values regarding parental involvement in educational governance and public education. Distinguishing between parental involvement in governance and in children's education, these participants agreed parents had minimal impact on school governance. A recognition that parents may be heard but had no power to make decisions, these individuals discriminated the difference between influence and decision-making. Although parents were not generally involved in decision-making, these presidents believed parents could make

recommendations for improving educational programs and for purchasing particular merchandise. A number of decisions assigned to parents in the past should be the responsibility of district administrators and school-based staff to prevent divisiveness among parents.

Another perspective shared by the presidents was parents experienced substantive pressure to make up for reductions in funding. To reduce this pressure, government officials should meet with representatives of various interest groups to discuss what are the basics in education and what are the priorities for government. Essential elements of education should then be adequately financed by government so parents can fund elective, enriching experiences. All participants concurred that the emergence of the global village and the emerging knowledge era posed unique challenges to education and our society, requiring proactive, creative thinking and solutions.

Common council practices noted by presidents included attempts to reach consensus among all active PAC members for decisions, and to encourage feed-back from all parents. Email and websites were cited as a good place for communicating with other parents, and for identifying parents' skills and areas of knowledge as potential resources. Participants agreed it was advantageous to have a class parent representative who communicated with all parents to involve them in PAC decisions. This process was viewed as creating consensus and a stronger school community. Further, parental involvement in the classroom was considered to be supported by some teachers, and resisted by others. Acknowledging some parents did not want a relationship with other parents, this group identified a further difficulty of involving more parents in school affairs. However, most presidents noted some parents were interested in enhancing the learning environment. Furthermore, these individuals perceived, "All parents are interested in their children's education; if parents feel welcome they will be more involved".

Suggestions

The analysis of the group discussions focussed on the consensus areas of the participants. Arising from their discussion on educational governance, numerous practices and challenges were noted which these presidents believed parents would appreciate addressed by the administrators of schools at the school, district, provincial and federal level. A significant proportion of their discussions centred on the funding of education, indicating the importance of this issue to participants. Observing the provincial government required the school district to

meet provincial standards for public education, these individuals contended that discretionary funds were insufficient for making meaningful changes, or addressing Special Needs Students' requirements. Further, participants maintained shortage of program funding had caused many parents to divide into special interests groups to compete for scarce resources which, ultimately, prevented them from working together for significant change. Moreover, presidents maintained the more parents raised funds to cover perceived government shortfalls, the more government shortfalls were hidden, and the more government was able to further reduce expenditures on education. A number of individuals noted public education was meant to be equal but the ability of more affluent PAC's to raise money for their local school compared to poorer PAC's threatened that philosophy. Participants agreed with one presidents' perception, who stated, "So we're really paying double taxes. You either pay taxes to the government and the government funds public education adequately, or we do what we're doing now where we pay our taxes and then we pay this other tax which is fund-raising". Some people believed parents should stop all fund-raising, however, there was general agreement that if this occurred there would be a period of readjustment in which some children would be penalized, and parents did not want "to sacrifice their children to the crisis".

In response to perceived needs at their schools, participants noted PAC members attempted to relieve fund-raising fatigue by scheduling initiatives throughout the school year. Stating PAC funds were given to grateful principals and/or teachers, participants believed the district would not have funded such things as gardens for school grounds, uniforms and field trips. Acknowledging some inequities in distribution of parent council funds occurred, presidents acknowledged fund-raising revenues were intended to enrich the educational experiences of all students, and to provide assistance to low-income students to ensure equitable access.

Stating the province and school district should reevaluate what constitutes a good education, this group maintained the definition of basic education was too narrow, and seemed to becoming narrower as funding was reduced. Reevaluation of education was of major concern, demonstrating the significant time and thought given to this issue by this group. Observing extra-curricular activities were excluded in the current definition of a basic education, presidents maintained the Victorian ideal of the Three R's was inappropriate for today's society. Participants suggested this old-fashioned model should be replaced by the Five R's- reading,

writing, arithmetic plus reasoning and respect. Presidents concurred children needed to be taught linear and critical thinking, to build a respectful community, and to enjoy learning. In addition, participants agreed children should be taught flexibility, and to understand that education was a process in which lessons were learned from mistakes, and accomplishments were achieved by work. Furthermore, the presidents maintained that reevaluation of education should be undertaken by the province, the district and other stakeholders with respect to school practices, and the content of education. Recognizing most people's unwillingness to accept additional taxes, participants suggested provincial budget allocations should be examined, and the government asked to justify its priorities.

Discussion on possible new models in educational governance generated a large number of comments. Suggestions proposed by the presidents included to implement a school-based management model used during pre-Confederation of Canada, to adapt the New Zealand model in which government legislates 50/50 female- male parental involvement, to increase inclusion of parents in local schools, to create a user-friendly environment which values parents' contributions and encourages their access to educational matters. Consensus was not reached on school-based management models as some presidents were concerned levels of parental involvement would remain limited irrespective of the model employed. Further, participants recognized this model would enable very small groups with their own agendas to gain too much power in some situations. Moreover, one participant stated, "You would get people who are attracted to management as opposed to the people who are interested in being involved in their children's schooling. This may not be representative of the parents as a whole". Such changes were acknowledged as possibly detrimental to the principle of the universality and quality of public education. Consequently, presidents agreed all stakeholders would need to be involved, and equity issues would need to be addressed in any discussions regarding possible changes in the present model of public education.

Thoughts with respect to school district issues tended to centre around employee contract language and its effect on the extent of parental involvement in the schools. As the amount of parents' volunteer work varied from school to school, presidents observed the Canadian Union of Public Employees (C.U.P.E.) had legitimate concerns about parents' volunteer work displacing unionized workers. To avoid unnecessary conflict, presidents maintained that parents needed to be respectful of C.U.P.E. workers, especially as these district employees' hours and/or positions

had been reduced, and more reductions were expected for Special Needs Assistants. Although volunteer work may be a problem in some school districts, participants noted this district's C.U.P.E. contract's language permitted parental involvement but within stated limits.

Restrictions on parents' volunteer work in particular areas such as school libraries were cited as examples where conflict could arise. However, these individuals recognized there was a general groundswell of discontent with respect to union regulations, and school policies and practices which excluded the utilization of parents' special skills to enrich children's education. Other school district matters which were commented upon included such issues as the possible reconfiguration of schools to enable the adoption of a middle school model; the perception that Grades 7-9 have more in common than Grades 6-8; less attachment to the local school may result; and small schools may be closed.

Teachers earned praise from three presidents for their difficult job, while two stated maintaining good communication with the teacher was parents' responsibility. Noting teacher-bashing was too prevalent, one participant stated, "A lot of teacher-bashing is off the cuff. I believe it's detrimental to the education system". The group acknowledged not all people will get along with every teacher; to address this situation, one president's school had implemented a process in which a trained parent representative acted as mediator between parents and teachers.

Inner City Funded & Non-funded Elementary School Group

Cross Case Analysis

Presidents' Aggregate Thoughts.

Personal Values

As a consequence of this analysis, several common thoughts were indicated by at least 60% of the participants. Examination of both groups revealed seven presidents stated they believed parents had a right to be involved in the culture and direction of their children's school. One participant noted the presence of barriers, while five participants clearly stated access to education was a fundamental right. Taken together, these six comments indicated participants valued access to public education.

Shared Perspectives

When discussing parental involvement in school governance and public education, seven out of ten presidents stated many parents perceived they have minimal impact on school governance, and one president noted parents had minimal effect on the curriculum. Four individuals perceived parents experienced substantive pressure to make up for the school revenues lost by reductions in government funding, while three individuals reported many parents considered themselves as responsible for creating an enriched, supportive school community.

Suggestions

Topics of discussion which emerged from the group interviews included the administration and management of schools, and the responsibilities of the different levels of authority including the local school, the district, the province and the federal government. A number of incidental comments were made by presidents during the interviews. More specifically, participants discussed a wide range of interests, namely, funding issues; the need for reevaluation of the basic requirements of quality public education by the province and school district; other nation's education models; union contract language restrictions on volunteers, and the effect on parental involvement; trustee visibility; recruitment challenges, and conflicting roles and heavy workloads of vice-principals; and government commitment to public education. Of major interest to most of these presidents, were first-order issues such as insufficient financial support of public education and the need to establish realistic levels of government funding. Second-order issues which received many comments were participants' perceived need for the province and school district to reevaluate what constitutes a good education.

Emergent Issues- Personal Values.

Cross-case analysis indicated several common perspectives emerged supported by a minimum of 60% of the participants.

Perspective 1

Parents had a right to be involved in the culture and direction of the school.

Perspective 2

Access to education was a fundamental right.

Emergent Issues- Shared Perspectives

Perspective 3

Parents had minimal impact on school governance.

Emergent Issues- Suggestions

Perspective 4

Insufficient funding of education needed to be addressed by federal and provincial governments, and realistic levels established necessary for reaching educational goals.

Perspective 5

Federal and provincial governments, and school district should reevaluate what constitutes a good education.

Documentation

Another source of data regarding parental involvement was a collection of documents which included provincial legislation on PAC's; British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils' (BCCPAC) published literature such as newsletters, pamphlets, texts and website information; Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils' (VCPAC) minutes of meetings and website information; and school PAC newsletters, minutes, and website information. Dates of newsletters and meetings' minutes centred around May, 2000. An examination of British Columbia's School Act (Statutes of British Columbia, 1989) was undertaken to find if any linkages existed between legislated authority and practice. A review of published materials identified a number of issues which, by the coverage and time devoted to them, reflected their importance to the parents involved in the councils.

Government & PAC Materials

Synopsis

Provincial Legislation.

As outlined in Section 7 (1) (c), of British Columbia's School Act (Statutes of British Columbia, 1989), a parent of a school age child is entitled to belong to a parents' advisory council. Section 8 (4) states PAC's elected officers may advise the principal and staff of the school, and the district's board on any matter relating to the school. Further, Section 8 (5) states the PAC shall make bylaws, in consultation with the principal, to govern its business, conduct, meetings, and dissolution.

BCCPAC Documents.

An examination of the British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Council's (BCCPAC) Mission Statement, website information, texts, and pamphlets indicated the provincial council's goals were congruous with B. C. legislation. Parents involved at this level of parents' advisory councils represented approximately 1,000 schools across the province. In conjunction with the legislation, these parents were involved in numerous external committees associated with the Canadian Home & School Federation, the Ministry of Education, and other professional organizations involved in public education. Other topics addressed in these documents were enticements to join, informative articles on education issues both in British Columbia and abroad, guest speakers, workshops, and reviews on educational resources.

VCPAC Documents.

Analysis of the Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Council's (VCPAC) Mission Statement, website information, and minutes of meetings indicated the school district's parent council's activities and goals corresponded to provincial legislation. VCPAC stated its primary purpose was to promote and encourage meaningful parental involvement to facilitate quality public education for students throughout the district and the province. An examination of this council's materials revealed parental involvement in external committees, reviews of educational resources, election issues, parent representative participation on a district senior administrative

staff hiring committee, and discussion of the impact of financial cut-backs and the district deficit to educational programs and possible reconfiguration of schools. The dominant item in the May, 2000 minutes was the school district's budget, and VCPAC's role in the formation of a recently implemented round table session consisting of three public meetings which allowed public input on budget allocations. A recent initiative by this organization to raise the issue of a more transparent budget allocation process, recently resulted in the district's Board of Trustees' decision to explore the feasibility of forming a District Budget Advisory Committee with parental input. The minutes reported that parent members of VCPAC voted to form a permanent committee to assess the district budget, to prepare recommendations, and to provide members with information. Further, this council and other stakeholders believed pressure was now required to review provincial funding formulae and mechanisms.

PAC Newsletters & Websites.

A review of Parent Advisory Council (PAC) newsletters, minutes of meetings and website materials disclosed that all ten PAC's interest and involvement with a variety of fund-raising efforts to support school activities, supplies and equipment, and encourage parental participation. These materials indicated strong support for participation in external committees, and school programs such as Bike Rodeos and Breakfast Clubs. Similarly, there was substantive consensus for recognizing students, staff and parents by a combination of ceremonies, written praise and thanks, and awards.

Emergent Perspectives.

As a consequence of this analysis, the documents gathered from all four areas expressed several common thoughts, namely:

Perspective 1

Parental activism through committee involvement, both internal and external to their particular PAC, corresponded with legislation and demonstrated a strong belief in the importance of parental involvement in public education.

Perspective 2

Parents at the school and district level demonstrated unanimous concern for funding of schools' perceived needs.

Disconfirming Evidence

The researcher noted five instances of disconfirming evidence, or unexpected outcomes, during analysis of the data. These insights and perspectives made by the participants were recorded for reflection and consideration. Documented as disconfirming evidence, these points of view emerged from all three areas of analysis.

Two topics emerged regarding local school affairs which was reflected upon by the author as analysis approached conclusion. The strength of conviction demonstrated by most participants for the view that many parents would like to be able to contribute parental expertise and skills to enrich students' learning experiences was an unexpected outcome. Several presidents suggested a process could be established in collaboration with school staff and parents to utilize parents' knowledge, and to enhance children's educational experiences. Demonstrating awareness of some of the internal dynamics and challenges faced by administrators, another unexpected outcome was the participants' acknowledgement of the difficulties and heavy workload associated with the vice-principals' dual role of teacher and administrator. Furthermore, these participants recognized district administration found it a challenge to find suitable candidates for this position.

Due to the author's unfamiliarity with home-schooling, an item noted for future consideration was one president's observation that social interaction was not an issue for home-schooled students in larger communities as their parents organized group field trips and other activities for students. While the frequency and nature is different, this outcome disputed the common perception that home-schooled students lacked social interactions with other students. A further remark which warrants future investigation was that some people believed parents should stop all fund-raising to force the government to address the dual issue of government funding of public education, and equal quality of education for all students. The final unexpected item for the author was discovering VCPAC had recently had a representative on the Staff Selection Committee for a senior administrative position. This level of parental representation indicated the legislated intent for parents to have a voice in all levels of educational governance is gradually taking effect.

Categorical Aggregation

The individual interviews, group interviews and documentation, when analysed, yielded a number of common instances. These instances were further detected by cross-case analysis and noted as emergent issues. Once these patterns had been identified, categorical aggregation commenced. More specifically, the author searched for commonalities and differences, issues and themes, and instances of disconfirming evidence.

Results of cross-case analysis for the ten individual interviews revealed all participants believed fund-raising contributions had a positive impact on the school community and their children's educational experiences, and parents' involvement with their children's education was important. Eight participants valued a good relationship with the school principal, while good communication with the school principal was important to seven individuals. Six presidents stated parents generally believed they had minimal impact in school, yet many parents noticed the tangible evidence of their fund-raising efforts.

Group discussions were aggregated into three categories, namely, personal values, shared perspectives regarding parental involvement in school governance and public education, and suggestions for administration and management of schools. Personal values shared by seven participants was a belief that parents had a right to be involved in the culture and direction of their children's school. Further, six individuals maintained access to education was a fundamental right for all children. Shared perspectives by seven presidents was parents perceived they had minimal impact on school governance. Participants' suggestions centred primarily on funding issues, and a perceived need for governmental and school district reevaluation of the basic requirements of quality education.

Collected documents included provincial legislation concerning Parent Advisory Council's and materials such as newsletters, websites and minutes available from the British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (BCCPAC), the Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils (VCPAC), and school PAC's. An examination of the data discovered congruence between provincial legislation and the various levels of parent councils' activities and interests. Analysis of BCCPAC literature revealed members' involvement in numerous

external committees to ensure parent representation with educational partners such as the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, and the Ministry of Education. Further, invitations for parents to participate, and recommendations for various information resources such as articles, workshops and guest speakers were noted in these materials. Documents from VCPAC disclosed a preoccupation with educational funding needs, and the recent achievement of a more open district budgeting process; participation in external committees, including a Hiring Committee for a senior administrative district position; and reviews of educational resources. Local school's Parent Advisory Council materials demonstrated overall interest and involvement in fund-raising efforts, as well as participation in external and internal committees, and recognition of staff and students through praise, ceremonies and awards.

Emergent Themes

At the conclusion of this analysis, the author reviewed the outcomes with respect to the professional literature, her personal paradigm, and the setting where the investigation was completed. This reflective thought yielded a number of emergent themes which could serve as a foundation for establishing a conceptual framework regarding parental involvement in public education. The emergent themes, which need to be further examined, were as follows:

Theme 1

Parents valued parental involvement in children's education.

Theme 2

Funding of education was a serious concern to parents.

Theme 3

Parents wanted to contribute their skills and expertise to enrich public education and children's educational experiences.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

And, as always, there is a dialectic of opinion: the sun of Ecclesiastes under which there is nothing new and the river of Heraclitus into which one cannot step twice.

(Hodgkinson, 2000, p.9)

As the new millennium commences, we have the opportunity to reassess the role of public education and to determine its relevance in contemporary society. Various models of education have been implemented in Western countries since the mid-eighties to answer perceived needs specific to their individual social, economic, and political cultures. Thus, as pressures for change to public education remain unabated, there is merit in undertaking an examination of Canadian values and perspectives to ensure we strengthen and build a foundation appropriate for an evolving society.

Although many Canadian provinces have passed legislation giving parents the right to advise, or in Quebec's case the right to partake in decision-making (Martin, 1991), pressures for access and changes in educational governance as the means to direct education continues to grow. In particular, as education is perceived by parents as increasingly essential to children's success, parents are likely to continue their efforts to achieve more influence and power regarding the curriculum and policies manifested in their children's school. Evaluation of parents' values and perspectives seems a prudent step before increased powers are legislated. A comprehensive survey of parents should be undertaken to determine whether parents' values mesh with public education's core values; parents acting on behalf of special interest groups cannot dominate school directions and culture; and parents will not become the scapegoat as accountability for the quality of public education widens, while funding is controlled by government. Further, the most basic enquiry should be made to discover if parents want increased responsibility for the quality of public education, and if so, to what extent?

Overview of Study

Purpose

Delineation of this study's purpose revealed five central topics for investigation. The primary purpose of this exploratory, qualitative study was to explore parents' perspectives, and underlying values with regards to public education. A secondary purpose was to identify parents' agendas, or what they anticipated accomplishing through their involvement in school governance. Another purpose was to discover what impact members of Parent Advisory Council's (PAC's) perceived they had with respect to what happens in their local school. Further, an attempt to determine the reason some parents have been involved for extended periods of time in school governance was a fourth purpose. The final purpose was to propose recommendations which will be helpful to forming effective partnerships with parents in the area of educational governance.

Significance

Given the context of global socio-economic restructuring, the unprecedented pace of change, and the increasing political activism by stakeholders on education issues, the answers derived from this qualitative investigation may be of political, social, and academic significance. In particular, due to the trend to legislate more parental involvement in educational governance, an examination of parents' values, perspectives and agendas was recommended for British Columbia before the approval of new initiatives. Emerging political conditions prior to the dawn of the 21st century were requiring educational leaders to forge effective partnerships with increasingly influential parents who were better educated, politically astute, and more demanding of customized services. (Sconyers,1996; Storey,1997) Many contemporary parents understood the wisdom and necessity of the political principle that if you are going to be affected by a decision, then you should have some influence in the decision-making process. (Sarason,1995). Thus, traditional educational leaders must now regard parents' efforts with due consideration and recognition. The findings of this research may provide insight and direction in

the task of building effective partnerships with parents for the realization of quality public education for all students. Further, this investigation partially reduced knowledge deficiency in this area by clarifying what participants believed parents want to see in terms of policy directions, and parents' inclusion in governance issues.

Socially, as they will be mirrored to varying degrees in the larger community, the agendas and perspectives of members of Parent Advisory Committees should be identified, and given due consideration by professional educators. Furthermore, if schools become increasingly self-sufficient (Caldwell & Spinks, 1997), then parents' perspectives and involvement will grow in importance. Since a link seems to exist between the state of education and the health of society, investigations into our underlying values and the practical effects of recent policies are essential. Whether historical Canadian support for universal public education still existed was discussed in the findings, while in-depth analysis clarified some of the values which lay behind parents' agendas. Academically, significance arises from the provision to scholars of an enriched understanding of parents committed to the welfare of their children's education. Further, this research may interest and motivate other scholar practitioners to make further enquiries in the consideration of parents' values, perspectives, and agendas; limits and effects of increased parental involvement; and guidelines for parental involvement and the development of effective partnerships.

Personal Paradigm

This enquiry was undertaken with the recognition the researcher was looking through an individualized lens coloured by a personal paradigm comprised of academic studies, observed practice, professional opinions, and personal experiences. Academic works which were of particular importance to the development of the author's perspectives included Hodgkinson's (1996) value paradigm which may be utilized as a tool to identify the underlying, motivational values behind behaviors and agendas; Fullan's (1991) conceptualization of change as a process rather than an event, and the development of educational leaders to effect greater change capacity in society's citizens, and to become "skilled change agents with moral purpose" (1993,

pp.4-5); Caldwell, Smilanich and Spinks (1988) definition of equity as conceived in terms of providing the best opportunity for learning for every student, regardless of personal circumstance; and Dahl's (1991) clarification of structural and personal limitations on agendas. These limitations consist of the composition of the agenda itself which limit an individual to choices prescribed within the agenda; the political, economic and social structures such as institutions or practices which permit or prohibit various options; and the way an individual perceives the world, and their consciousness of their influence.

The author was influenced by fellow educators' professional concerns regarding parents' participation in schools, and parents' concerns regarding their role as an advocate for children. These concerns indicated one of the most significant issues is the value set of parents which included concern for their children. Another significant value set was the author's belief in the public good, and the nurture of Canadian children toward responsible, caring citizenship as stated as a basic tenant to the defunct Year 2000 Initiative (Glegg & Murphy, 1994). Further, the author was concerned by the political activism of special interest groups in the period before and during the progress of the study, and their potential to displace the principles of universality and equality of public education. Another significant concern was that disparities were beginning to emerge among Canadian schools which revealed "have" and "have-not" schools, and the possible evolution toward a more marked two-tiered educational system. The evolving social, economic, academic and political milieu provided a frame of reference for this writer's reflection on emerging contemporary school governance. These evolving conditions established the context for the author's personal paradigm.

Methodology

Qualitative Research: Case Study

The five traditions of qualitative inquiry were summarized by Cresswell (1998) as biography, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. According to this author, these approaches differ "in the diversity of information collected, the unit of study being examined, the extent of field issues, and the intrusiveness of the data collection effort" (p.135). After reflective thought, a case study approach was selected. Case studies attempt to note phenomena within given boundaries of place or concept as described by the participants'

meanings of processes and events. Yin (1994) observed, "As a research endeavour, the case study contributes uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organizational, social, and political phenomena" (p.2). Furthermore, a case study design is appropriate when researchers are interested in examining "groups of individuals participating in an event or activity or an organization" (Cresswell, 1998, p.135). Thus, a case study design was particularly suited for investigating parents' values, perspectives and agendas regarding public education and parental involvement in educational governance.

Defined by Creswell (1998) as "an exploration of a "bounded system" or a case.... bounded by time and place... involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (p.61), the use of a case study approach permitted the researcher to conduct in-depth individual interviews. As multiple individuals from multiple sites were interviewed, this was a multiple case study. Typically conducted as an informal conversation, interviewing may be described as "a conversation with a purpose" (Kahn & Cannell, 1957, p.149). During conversation the researcher "explores a few general topics to help uncover the participant's meaning perspective, but otherwise respects how the participant frames and structures the responses" (Marshall & Rossman, p.80). To yield good results from an interview, the researcher requires skill listening, carefully framing questions, gently probing for elaboration, and good interpersonal interaction. For the purposes of this investigation, a case study design provided the researcher a suitable vehicle to acquire a deeper understanding of parents' perspectives and values at a time of increasing legitimization of parents as new partners in school affairs and governance.

Design

Once a 'Certificate of Approval' was granted by the University of Victoria's Human Ethics Committee, letters were sent to Parent Advisory Council Presidents requesting their voluntary participation for an individual, in-depth interview and a small group interview to be held with their peers. Also, letters were sent as a courtesy to school principals to inform them of the research. Contextual conditions for this enquiry were bounded by the school year 1999-2000, and the ten elementary schools and their parent councils.

In this research the cases, or units of study, were ten Parent Advisory Council presidents randomly selected with quota sampling from thirty-eight elementary schools in School District #61 (Greater Victoria), British Columbia, Canada. (Cohen & Manion, 1994) The 1999- 2000 Ministry of Education Inner City Funding list of elementary schools was obtained from the school district and divided into two lists based on whether or not a school received this type of funding to draw the proportionate quota sample. Further, to acknowledge the diversity within the district the researcher decided to interview approximately twenty-five percent of the sample. Thus, three schools were randomly selected from the inner city funded group, and seven schools were randomly selected from the non-inner city funded group.

Data triangulation was accomplished with document analysis, individual in-depth interviews, and two group sessions. Documents consisted of legislation, British Columbia Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils and Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Councils websites and materials, and Parent Advisory Council minutes, websites and newsletters. A synopsis was made from these materials to determine unique and common themes. Within-case analysis and cross-case analysis were conducted for the ten individual case studies, and then among the two groups once the data were aggregated. Salient themes and patterns of correspondence were identified, and differences noted. Instances of disconfirming evidence, or unexpected outcomes, were identified for future consideration. Pseudonyms were used for schools and participants to preserve anonymity, while all documents, transcriptions, notes and tapes were held in a locked drawer.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations which affected the validity of the study were the number of elementary schools' Parent Advisory Committees; the assumption participants were able to respond frankly and openly within the context of group membership; the author's bias and inexperience with academic research; participants' bias; the scarcity of literature and research on parents' values, perspectives and agendas regarding public education; and the time lag before data analysis. Another limitation which needs to be noted was the composition of the parent councils was not

always representative of the community it served, but the scope of this study was not large enough to include them. Consequently, the author acknowledges that the views of these participants may not be those of all parents with children at their schools, nor of other PAC presidents. Furthermore, the author may or may not have been aware of all the factors influencing her judgment, yet every effort was made to remain impartial. To provide a balance the author's known biases were reported in the conceptual framework, and outcomes which appeared contrary to the author's views were noted as disconfirming evidence for future consideration. Delimitations included the fact this study was only conducted in the province of British Columbia's School District # 61 (Greater Victoria) during late spring of the school year 1999/2000, and only Parent Advisory Committee Presidents from elementary schools were asked for their participation.

Major Findings

Major purposes of this research endeavour were satisfied by collection of information from the three components of this research, namely individual interviews, group interviews and documentation. A number of findings with regards to parents' values, perspectives and agendas were discovered by careful review and analysis of the rich data. These findings are presented as follows:

1. Parents at school and district level demonstrated unanimous concern for funding of public education (100%- Group & Documents); parents perceived they have a right to be involved in the culture and direction of the school (70%- Group); and access to education is a fundamental right (60%- Group).
2. Parents valued a positive relationship (80%- Individual), and good communication (70%- Individual) with school principal.
3. Parents' fund-raising efforts benefited their children's school community and educational experience (100%- Individual); parents perceived they had little impact on school governance (70%- Group); many parents believed they had little impact in the school (60%- Individual); and tangible evidence of their fund-

raising efforts was noticed by many parents (60%- Individual).

4. Participants believed parental involvement in their children's education was very important (100%- Individual & Documents).
5. Insufficient funding of education needs to be addressed by federal and provincial governments, and realistic levels established for achieving educational goals (100%- Group); and federal and provincial governments, and school district should reevaluate what are basic essentials for contemporary quality public education (100%- Group).

Discussion

Based on the reviewed literature, the author's personal perspectives, and the major findings from this qualitative investigation, the following conclusions emerged, namely, parents value parental involvement in children's education; funding of education was a serious concern to parents; and parents wanted to contribute their skills and expertise to enrich public education and children's educational experiences. This synopsis served as a starting point for the discussion regarding the outcomes of analysis.

At each stage of analysis areas of consensus and patterns of correspondence emerged from evidence gathered from both the individual and group interviews, and the documentation. However, when data were aggregated and analysed some emergent themes no longer had enough support to warrant inclusion in the final summary. Interestingly, the data collected from both the Funded and the Non-Funded participants were predominantly similar. There were several perspectives worthy of note, found in both the individual and group interviews but receiving less than 60% consensus, including participants' observations regarding the challenge many PAC's faced involving more parents in the school and/or PAC; and the desire to shift emphasis away from fund-raising. In addition, presidents reported, due to their sense of responsibility, many parents felt a lot of pressure to replace perceived government funding cuts to ensure quality education for children. Further insights included the recognition of the importance of public education to enable individuals to fulfill their potential and function in the community. Final

conclusions only represented areas which had received unanimous interest, namely: participants believed parental involvement in children's education was very important, educational funding was a serious concern to parents, and parental contribution of skills and knowledge would enrich children's learning experiences and public education.

The concepts which influenced the author's personal paradigm were also considered in evaluation of the data. Using Hodgkinson's (1996) value paradigm, a number of parents' values became apparent, namely, their belief in public education as a way to ensure access of education, build tolerance and respect for diversity, help others, achieve educational excellence for each student, and act as a role model for their children. All these beliefs could be classified as Type II A (rational-consequence). Although the presidents who participated in this investigation worked to achieve consensus with other parents, the values which motivated their actions were in the interests of the greater good, and weighed the consequences of their actions or inactions. All these individuals demonstrated they were endeavouring to be skilful change agents with a moral purpose in order to make a positive difference in children's lives. Further, when Fullan's (1991) definition of first and second order changes were employed to study the data, nine out of ten presidents were trying to effect first-order changes. These participants had clearly conceptualized their efforts as attempts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the current system. While operating within this system, one president among the non-funded individuals proposed second-order change to alter existing structures, roles and, possibly, goals. Another individual from this group noted other models of educational governance but was concerned implementation may lead to inequities for students.

Caldwell, Smilanich and Spinks (1988) definition of equity in terms of providing the best opportunity for learning for every student was mirrored in the participants' comments. An assessment of these parents' sense of efficacy, or sense of influence or power, was analysed utilizing Dahl's (1991) clarification of limitations to agendas. Within the context set by British Columbian legislation, Dahl's first limitation which stated agendas are limited by the choices available by composition of the agenda, did not seem to apply as some parents did exert control over the composition of what they wanted to accomplish. However, conditions for Dahl's second limitation were met as parents' agendas were limited by political structures restricting parents' to

the right to advise professional educators, as well as social and economic conditions. The third limitation is more interesting as it consists of the way an individual perceives the world, and their awareness of their scope of influence. Analysis revealed that all presidents perceived they had some influence in the schools they served, and to a certain extent, in the district and province. Yet some of these individuals reported many parents, particularly those not involved in school activities, perceived parents had little or no impact in the school. Thus, for those parents their sense of efficacy was limited, and their "actual influence is less than potential influence" (Dahl, p.25).

Substantial amounts of information were provided by participants but, due to time and space limitations, many individual comments were not included in the final summation. However, some unique and insightful comments were noted as disconfirming evidence. These unexpected outcomes included the strength of conviction demonstrated by most participants for the view that many parents would like to be able to contribute parental expertise and skills within the school to enrich the curriculum. Further, the author noted several participants' recognition of the challenges faced by administration to fill vice-principal positions due to the conflicting and time-consuming dual role of teacher and administrator. Another unexpected observation that social interaction was not an issue for home-schooled students living in larger communities as their parents organized group activities. Also one participant reported that some people believed parents should stop all fund-raising to expose the true state of under-funding of public education in the province. Finally, the representation of the Victoria Confederation of Parent Advisory Council's on a Staff Selection Committee for a senior district position was previously not known by the author; this involvement indicated parents' growing influence as the legislation was gradually translated into practice.

Other issues remarked upon by participants included a desire for more visibility and communication on the part of trustees at their local schools, and for reassessment of public education to include the five R's- reading, writing, arithmetic, reasoning and respect. Another insightful remark noted competition for limited resources divided parents and prevented them from forming a powerful political force. Discussions also revealed many presidents appeared to have some degree of political astuteness as they were aware of the limitations of

legislation and could discriminate between influence and power, especially with respect to decision-making. Furthermore, a number of presidents noted that some parents were only interested in a single-issue, and their participation ceased once their concern was addressed. Yet, often discussion among parents demonstrated, as one president observed, that the “concerns of a few vocal parents were not an issue for the majority”. Participants recognized some parents do not become involved in school affairs due to other priorities, cultural differences, and time constraints. However, one individual pointed out, “many people don't feel empowered.... A lot of people don't have a voice; they feel they don't have a right to one.” Although many parents do not participate within the school for a variety of reasons, this study yielded evidence to suggest many parents who are actively involved feel a responsibility to act as advocates for all students. Furthermore, several participants stressed the importance of creating a welcoming school environment in which learning, diversity, and the individual strengths of each student were celebrated. If parents were invited to be involved in the development of a school climate conducive to learning and collaboration, parents may achieve their expressed desire to be part of school affairs in a meaningful way.

Recommendations

Based on the review of academic literature, the writer's personal paradigm, and findings and conclusions generated by analysis of the rich data yielded in this study, a number of relevant recommendations were proposed. Specifically, as this study indicated parents' perspectives encompassed all governance levels within the educational system, areas for considered suggestions included the federal and provincial government, the school district and local schools.

Parent Advisory Councils

Parents involved in PAC's demonstrated a variety of approaches to address perceived needs within their children's school. More specifically, parents' fund-raising activities enhanced students' learning experiences, addressed administrators' priorities, and satisfied teachers' wish

lists'. Many parents acknowledged they had little impact on school governance but some stated they did not want increased responsibility for generating revenues for their schools' perceived essential supplies. Also, a number of participants did not feel it was beneficial for parents to become involved in policy-making and/or curriculum, and indicated these areas should be the responsibility of professional educators. However, lack of influence and power in decision-making was noted as a reason some parents do not get involved with parent councils. Although extent of desired parental involvement varied, several participants did want to be involved with the selection of new teachers, and in one case parental representation was already part of the school culture. Several recommendations regarding PAC's can be formed from this investigation as follows:

1. Parents should be trained and utilized as mediators for teacher-parent communication when problems arise.
2. Parents acting as class representatives should develop individual Class Parent Resource Indexes outlining parents' skills and knowledge areas they wanted to share with the class to enhance children's learning experiences.
3. Emphasis should be shifted away from fund-raising efforts and provision of educational essentials, to enriching the school community and children's learning experiences in collaboration with staff.

Local Schools

Participants acknowledged not all parents were able to become involved in the school and local school governance, and many other parents would only participate when they were needed. However, presidents offered suggestions to increase parental involvement within the school, including the following:

1. Principals and staff should establish good communication and positive relationship with parents.
2. Principals should set the tone for the school culture and establishing a welcoming environment.

3. Parents' skills and knowledge should be viewed and utilized by staff as a resource to enrich children's learning experiences and the school community.
4. The role of PAC's may be re-conceptualized to allow parents to exchange ideas, problem-solve, and develop initiatives with administration and staff.
5. Staff and parents should collaborate on the development and review of a School Handbook which outlines the school's philosophy, School Growth Plan's goals, and practical orientation matters.

School District

Several Parent Advisory Council Presidents acknowledged the challenge faced by the district due to the School Board's limited 8% discretionary funds and the district's projected deficit. These limited financial resources had caused divisions among parents who championed the survival of one well-regarded program over another. Of particular concern to some participants was the likely loss of the Elementary Strings Program, reductions in Special Needs Student Assistants, and possible school closures. Presidents offered their advice to the district on a number of topics, listed as follows:

1. School trustees should increase visibility and communication in the schools and with parents.
2. To ensure student equity and equality are being addressed, it is sometimes necessary for the district to make decisions without parental consultation.
3. In consultation with parents, protocols should be established for all schools outlining steps for good communication, processing complaints and congratulations, building a welcoming school community, and utilizing parents' knowledge and skills.
4. Principals should be provided professional development on building effective partnerships with parents.

Provincial Government

British Columbia's Ministry of Education was viewed as responsible for adequately funding public education, and for acting in the best interests of students. Presently, many parents believed numerous educational essentials were only realized at their school due to parents' contributions of fund-raising revenues. Further, the extra support established when Special Needs Students were integrated into regular classrooms was perceived to be constantly eroding due to financial constraints. This inadequacy was believed to have negative effects not only on Special Needs Students, but on all students and teachers. As such, several recommendations can be made as follows:

1. Given the global context and the dawn of the knowledge era, the provincial government should establish what constitutes a sound education for life in the 21st century, and should view education in much broader terms. When the government is identifying priorities for resource allocations, parent representatives from a variety of interest groups should be involved in the process.
2. Essential elements should be adequately funded by government to ensure equity for all students, and to allow parents to fund elective, enriching experiences.
3. School districts should have sufficient discretionary funds to make significant, meaningful changes, or to address Special Needs and ESL Students' requirements.
4. Funding levels should be increased, taking into account continuing financial constraints and declining student enrollments.
5. To alleviate parents' concerns, the Minister of Education should have a background in education, and/or be well-informed of both provincial needs and local concerns regarding the schooling provided children. Furthermore, this individual should demonstrate awareness of what's happening across Canada and overseas with respect to new developments in education.
6. Senior ministry staff should have their children in public education to demonstrate their commitment to public education.

Federal Government

In Canada, education is a provincial responsibility. However, Parent Advisory Council literature and participants of this research indicated recognition of a need for federal leadership and influence to ensure high public education standards are achieved based on the Canadian values of universality, inclusion and quality. Participants contended as a nation we need to provide a good education for our children as they will determine the future welfare of our society. Furthermore, from personal experience some participants recognized the support of the public and government for public education, post-secondary institutions and post-secondary student loans enabled children to reach their potential and function within our society.

Expectations for the federal government included the following:

1. Existing networks should be evaluated, and associations developed to better communicate shared experiences and knowledge, with the ultimate goal of enriching students' educational experiences and opportunities.
2. The federal government should provide national vision, and identify common goals for education.
3. An investigation should be undertaken to determine adequate levels of funding, and financial assistance provided where necessary.
4. Federal leadership should support public education, and the education of the public.

Emergent Themes

Difficult as values are to discover, this study has the beginnings for the development of a frame of reference for future scholastic endeavours. Through the use of a personal paradigm and a case study approach, a difficult task was completed. Findings generated from rich data provided an in-depth understanding of the issues relevant to parents' values and perspectives regarding public education and parental involvement in educational governance. Based on patterns from the data and categorical aggregation, three clear themes emerged including parents

valued parental involvement in children's education, parents were seriously concerned with the funding of education, and parents wanted to contribute their skills and expertise to enrich public education and children's educational experiences.

Parental Involvement

Although both the participants and the documentation indicated parents valued parental involvement in children's education, most of the Parent Advisory Council presidents noted many parents do not participate in school activities or governance. These individuals reported a variety of reasons for the limited involvement of parents in school affairs including time constraints, family or other commitments, cultural differences, a limited sense of personal efficacy, fear of negative consequences to their children, a personal history of negative school experiences, and/or the perception parents have little real influence. Several participants also observed that school principals were viewed as instrumental in the level of parental involvement in a school. Thus, while aggregation revealed unanimous support that parental involvement in children's education was valued, recognition must be made that the level and nature of this involvement varies widely. Moreover, despite substantial evidence demonstrating parental involvement was actively solicited at every level of the parent council organization, the majority of parents were not active in school governance.

Funding of Public Education

Analysis of the data clearly established that parents within the school and at all levels of the parent council organization were seriously concerned with the funding of education. Several participants expressed their dissatisfaction with ongoing fiscal constraints, and their concern for the negative consequences of inadequate funding on students' education. In particular, some parents specified the reduction in resources, programs and support personnel had reduced the quality of educational experiences for Special Needs and ESL (English as Second Language) Students, and limited Fine Arts opportunities for all students. Many of the presidents indicated

parents now felt a responsibility to fund-raise and volunteer to support basics which they believed should be inherent to education. These individuals noted parents wanted to fund items which enriched their children's education and the school community, not what they perceived to be essentials such as art supplies, library books, basic technology, curriculum resource materials, and equipment. All levels of the parent council organization were actively involved in discussions on this issue.

Parents' Skills and Expertise

Together, the individual and group interviews, and the documentation revealed many parents wanted to contribute their skills and expertise to enrich public education and children's educational experiences. While aggregation indicated many parents wanted a voice in school affairs such as teacher selection, the collection of parents' instances of involvement and representation in external committees at the national, provincial and school district level indicated the intent of legislation was increasingly realized. At the local school level, several participants indicated they would like a process established within the school which would facilitate the development of collaboration, communication and community. Most participants indicated parents wanted to be viewed as the natural allies of educational professionals. Moreover, they wanted to support children's educational learning experiences by contributing parents' knowledge and skills in consultation with teachers. Significantly, little evidence was discovered to suggest that a majority of parents wanted major structural reform to the present education system.

Summary

In summary, these Parent Advisory Council Presidents identified several elements they perceived were necessary for the creation of an enriched learning community. According to Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1998), the key elements of effective partnerships are knowledge and skill, power, information, and equitable distribution of rewards. This premise is supported by the participants' of this investigation who observed many parents wanted to offer

their diverse knowledge and skills to professional educators; establish effective communication to share information; and exercise influence and power in achieving equity for all students, including disadvantaged students. As the majority of parents maintained more influence, concern for special or single-interest parents was acknowledged but was not perceived to be a significant problem. Interestingly, given the amount of attention by the media and professional literature, none of these participants spoke of public education in terms of economic benefit. All comments indicated a concern for community values of respect, cooperation, access, equity, and advocacy for the disadvantaged. Education was viewed as a means to achieve personal potential, and to contribute to society at the micro and/or macro level. Although these findings were far from conclusive and were representative of a small sample, the findings of this investigation should be noted by Canadian politicians, government officials, and educational leaders when determining future directions for educational policy.

Future Research

A decade has passed since the Canadian province of British Columbia enacted legislation providing Parent Advisory Councils the right to advise within the educational governance system. However, minimal empirical research exists with respect to parents' agendas or views regarding their involvement and influence in this area both within this province, or within the country. Given the potential for parents' long-term influence, investigations into their underlying values which shape their behaviours, and may shape the directions and forms of public education in the future, were also looked for but were very scarce. Further, a search of the professional literature, including other Western countries which have recently legislated increased parental involvement in school governance such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Great Britain, revealed the scarcity of empirical longitudinal studies, and very few instances of enquiry into parents' values, perspectives, or agendas. This inadequate data base provides the foundation for future studies centred on the new player, parents, in educational governance. Since governments in many countries are considering school-based management as part of the trend towards democratizing school governance, there is very little research with respect to this new

model of governance. More research is needed and must be undertaken promptly because of political, economic and social forces driving school systems to be more decentralized, participatory, autonomous, and entrepreneurial.

Outcomes of this investigation may encourage scholars, practitioners, and government officials to initiate new research studies in this important area of enquiry. These individuals may want to consider the following recommendations for future research, namely:

1. This exploratory enquiry should be duplicated with appropriate modifications in other educational jurisdictions across Canada, as well as in British Columbia.
2. At the micro level, Parent Advisory Council presidents in another district, and/or district level parent councils' representatives, and/or British Columbia Confederation Parent Advisory Council's representatives should be surveyed to establish the generalizability of this research's findings.
3. Administrators and teachers should be surveyed to determine their perspectives regarding parental involvement in educational governance, and to discover proven practices for effective partnerships with parents.
4. To add breadth to the findings of this investigation, and to determine whether a shift away from historical Canadian values for public education can be detected, stakeholders and parents not active within the school should be interviewed to investigate their perspectives and views regarding public education.
5. A quantitative study should be initiated to establish a larger profile of Canadian parents. Such an endeavour could be utilized to guide policies; act as a feasibility study for determining methods parents may contribute their skills and expertise to enrich educational experiences of students; or assist in the development of protocols for parental involvement within educational governance in order to enhance the school community.

- 6. A single, in-depth longitudinal case study should be conducted within a school in which parents believed they are actively involved and valued by administration and teachers, in order to gain a real understanding of the dynamics and complexities of participatory governance, and what it means to parents. Patterns of behaviours and meanings may emerge which would be helpful in constructing a model for effective partnerships between parents and school staff.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

YOUNG, J. (1994) Thesis Edms4 Graduate Student 2005/01/19/03 HA	DEPARTMENT Edms4	APPROVED BY Dr. P. Murphy	
Title: <u>Engagement & Value of Parent Members of Parent Advisory Committees</u>			
PROJECT NO. 15903	START DATE 02 May 99	END DATE 01 May 01	REVIEW DATE 04 May 00

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the University of Victoria Ethics Review Committee on Research and Other Activities Involving Human Subjects has reviewed the research proposal and concludes that, in all respects, the proposed research meets appropriate standards of ethics outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations involving Human Subjects.


 J. Howe (Imp)
 Associate Vice-President of Research

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above item provided there is no change to the procedure. Extension/renewal amendments may be granted upon receipt of "Request for Continuing or Renewal Amendment of an Approved Project" form.

APPENDIX A

Certificate of Approval



University of Victoria

Human Research Ethics Committee

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

<u>PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR</u> Susan Enfield Graduate Student	<u>DEPARTMENT/SCHOOL</u> EDUC	<u>SUPERVISOR</u> Dr. P. Murphy	
<u>CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):</u> N/A			
<u>TITLE:</u> Perspectives & Values of Parent Members of Parent Advisory Committee			
<u>PROJECT No.</u> 159-00	<u>START DATE</u> 02 May 00	<u>END DATE</u> 01 May 01	<u>APPROVAL</u> 01 May 00

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that the University of Victoria Ethics Review Committee on Research and Other Activities Involving Human Subjects has examined the research proposal and concludes that, in all respects, the proposed research meets appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Regulations Involving Human Subjects.

J. Howard Brunt,
Associate Vice-President, Research

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the procedures. Extensions/minor amendments may be granted upon receipt of "Request for Continuing Review or Amendment of an Approved Project" form.

APPENDIX B

Letter to Prospective Participants

Susan Enfield

Address Susan Enfield

April, 2000.

Dear PAC President,

I am currently attending the University of Victoria as a graduate student in the Masters of Educational Psychology and Leadership Program. As part of the requirements for the completion of my degree, I would like to conduct research with parents who are presidents of Parent Advisory Councils for Victoria's elementary schools to discover their perspectives and values regarding education today, and their ideas for the future.

The purpose of this letter is to ask you, as the president of your school's PAC, to volunteer for an individual interview to be held at your convenience. This would be followed by another interview in a small group with your fellow presidents. I am interested, specifically, in 'taking the pulse' of today's presidents of Parent Advisory Councils to discover their concerns, interests and hopes for public education both for today and the future. PAC presidents' stories, comments, insights, and reflections are too often overlooked, but I believe they are quite valuable. There has been almost no research to date which has asked PAC presidents what they consider to be important. I hope to be able to give PAC presidents a voice; one that has, so far, not been recorded.

If you agree to participate in my study, please know that your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. Interviews will be treated in the strictest confidence. Presidents' comments will be kept strictly confidential; only my supervisor, Dr. Peter Murphy, and I will have access to the transcribed notes and audio-tapes of the interviews. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants. Participants and schools will not be identified nor identifiable in the written report. All audio-tapes and notes will be kept in a locked cabinet until the final submission of the study to the University of Victoria, at which time they will be shredded and destroyed. Dr. Peter Murphy may be reached at (pjmurph@uvic.ca) or 721-7825.

If you agree to participate, I would be happy to consult with you regarding the best times to meet. I hope to complete the interviews in May, 2000, possibly before the long weekend.

Thank you for time and consideration.

Please call me at either of my telephone numbers, or email me, to let me know if you are interested. I welcome your input and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Susan Enfield,

M. A. Candidate, University of Victoria.

Telephone (Res.):

APPENDIX C

Letter to Principals

Susan Enfield
Address

April 26, 2000.

_____, Principal

Elementary School
School District #61, Greater Victoria

Dear Principal,

I am currently attending the University of Victoria as a graduate student in the Masters of Educational Psychology and Leadership Program. As part of the requirements for the completion of my degree, I would like to conduct qualitative research with ten presidents of Parent Advisory Councils to discover their perspectives and values regarding public education today, and their ideas for the future.

The purpose of this letter is to advise you that I will be contacting the president of the Parent Advisory Council for your school. As I will be working with parents, the district stated I did not need permission but I believe it is courteous to keep you informed. I will be asking the PAC president to volunteer for an individual interview to be held at her/ his convenience, to be followed by a small group interview with other PAC presidents. Interviews will be treated in the strictest confidence. Participants and schools will not be identified in the written report. Presidents' comments will be kept strictly confidential. Only my supervisor, Dr. Peter Murphy, and I will have access to the transcribed notes and audio-tapes of the interviews. Dr. Peter Murphy may be reached at (pjmurph@uvic.ca) or 721-7825.

I have enclosed a copy of the covering letter that will be sent to presidents of the Parent Advisory Committees, and sample consent forms to be signed by the PAC presidents.

Thank you for your time. I hope to complete the research within the spring term for the school year 1999/ 2000. Once the project has been completed, I would be happy to provide you with a copy of my findings.

Sincerely,

Susan Enfield
M. A. Candidate
University of Victoria
Telephone (Res.):

APPENDIX D

PAC President's Consent Form

I understand that Susan Enfield is conducting research with presidents of Parent Advisory Councils to discover their perspectives and values regarding parents' roles in public education. The interviews will be conducted by Ms. Enfield, researcher and graduate student of the Masters of Educational Psychology and Leadership Program at the University of Victoria.

I understand that I am volunteering to be interviewed, individually, by Susan Enfield for one, 45 minute interview, to be followed by a small group interview with other PAC presidents to be held at my convenience. I understand that the research project will be conducted during the spring term for the year 1999/ 2000. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that participants may withdraw at any time.

I understand that these interviews will be treated in the strictest confidence. Presidents' comments will be kept strictly confidential; only Susan and her research supervisor, Dr. Peter Murphy, will have access to the transcribed notes and audio-tapes of the interviews. Pseudonyms will be used for all participants. Participants and schools will not be identified nor identifiable in the written report. All audio-tapes and notes will be kept in a locked cabinet until the final submission of the study to the University of Victoria, at which time they will be shredded and destroyed. Dr. Peter Murphy may be reached at (pjmurph@uvic.ca) or 721-7825.

I understand that I will be provided the opportunity to read the final report.

I hereby give my consent to Susan Enfield to be interviewed individually, followed by one small group interview with other PAC presidents:

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Researcher:

Ms. Susan Enfield
Telephone (Res.):

VITA

Surname: Enfield

Given Names: Susan Mary Rowbotham

Place of Birth: Middleton, Nova Scotia, Canada

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	1997 to 2001
University of British Columbia	1994 to 1995
York University	1990 to 1993

Degrees Awarded:

B. A. (Honours), First Class Standing	York University	1993
B. Ed., First Class Standing	University of British Columbia	1995

Honours and Awards:

University of Victoria Fellowship	1997-1999
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Publications:


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Title of Thesis:

Values, Perspectives and Agendas of Parent Advisory Council Presidents

Author


Susan M. Rowbotham Enfield
April 30, 2001