The attrition of change

Thesis

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The Attrition of Change

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Chapter 5

Creation and Experimentation - The Analysis

Byron’s creation in 1970 was a response to pressures which school and system leaders felt intuitively, but could not identify or articulate with precision. Their collective experiences, insights and sensibilities led them to design a school which in many ways was ahead of its time. What resulted however, was a change process with an ill-defined, or at least partially developed, theoretical base. As Wesley Walters reflected:

We were like Thomas Kuhn’s (1962) paradigm pioneers. We didn’t have the statistically validated basis for what we were doing, some of us acted based on experience. My feeling after 25 years is the precepts we enunciated clearly enough in 1970-1974 have been validated in the following 20 odd years (Interview, W.W.1995).

In a similar vein Ward Bond suggested that:

. . . people are now just starting to do a lot of the things done then. Why they are just doing it now is probably because they are just maybe beginning to understand them - the need for them, the desirability, maybe they are being encouraged to do so (Interview, W.B.1994).

Lord Byron was a product of its times. As a member of the Byron women’s group recalled:
we were largely very young, largely single, not everybody, but many were beginning their careers and they were people who not only brought youth and idealism but also a particular philosophy because they had come through the universities of the 60's. The times were significant for the things we did. Byron could not have happened in the 80's and couldn't have happened in the early 60's either (Interview, P. L. 1994).

Byron was the result of that 'particular philosophy' which came to characterise the 1960s - an age which exalted the individual as opposed to the corporate, identified with the disenfranchised rather than the majority culture, and prized intuition and creativity over rationality and conformity. The challenge at Byron was to translate these ill-defined ideals into a workable school. The timing could not have been better. The political and social contexts of Ontario and South were ripe for experimentation.

Context

The Sizemore legacy

It is difficult to trace the exact origins of the Byron concept but certainly "the genuine interest" (Interview, P. M. 1995) of the Director of Education was vital. School districts play a major role in supporting, or indeed in undermining educational change (Huberman and Miles, 1984; Rosenholtz, 1989; Louis and Miles, 1990; Fullan, 1991; Corbett and Wilson, 1992). The district's role in the establishment of Byron was crucial (Fullan et al, 1972; Watts, 1977; Fletcher et al, 1985; Smith et al, 1987). The Director of the South
Board established the Innovations Committee which provided the initial impetus for the school. Perhaps unwittingly, however, by authorising a fairly elite group of South’s staff to envision a school of the future, he created what Fullan and Eastabrook (1977) have described as “a group of people working on a common problem independently of the larger community, tending to grow in a direction incomprehensible to their co-workers and associates who had not experienced the learning process undergone by the committee members” (p.224). Most of South’s other employees, and virtually all of the potential parents and pupils of Byron, had no idea what was being contemplated (Fullan et al, 1972).

Certainly the appointment of Ward Bond as the first principal was an important system decision. As one observer commented “I don’t know if the system realised how radical Bond really was” (Interview, W.W. 1995). By giving Bond a year to plan, the opportunity to hire most of his staff and the agreement to use a different staffing process, the system enabled him to design what for the times was a radical alternative. It required a politically confident chief executive officer to convince or, as some have suggested, coerce the Board and reluctant senior administrators to support the Byron concept (Interviews, J. G.; D.K. 1996). Sizemore was also able to influence the teachers’ union to permit differentiated staffing and an alternative organisation at Byron (Interview, P.M. 1995).

The district Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Association, (O.S.S.T.F., the teachers’ union) was very much on everyone’s mind when Byron was established. The Assistant Director at the time recalls:
I’m not sure the staff was aware of this but Byron was under siege from a number of sources including the local district and particularly its leaders . . . They held great suspicion and opposition to the notion of the reallocation of resources, the abandonment of the traditional department heads and assistant heads, minor heads etc. (Interview, E. S. L. 1994).

This opposition occurred within a climate in which the provincial O.S.S.T.F. had taken a public stance in opposition to the broadly progressive Hall-Dennis report and had opposed H.S.1. (the curriculum plan for secondary schools). In spite of its professional rhetoric, the Federation and particularly its South division tended to have more concerned with creating jobs for teachers than with supporting experimental approaches to school and classroom organisation. As the school’s superintendent at the time of its opening said, “O.S.S.T.F. was never open-minded on the chairmanship organisation” (Interview, D. K.). The Federation’s compliance with the Byron experiment was bought at the price of a full review of Byron after five years.

Despite his silence on the topic, Sizemore appeared to see Byron as a way to push the newly created South system and particularly its secondary schools into more progressive educational directions. He always took great interest in the number of visitors to Byron and the number and type of presentations made by Bond and his staff to other schools and provincial organisations. He hoped that as a result of Byron “the entire level of the system would be raised” (Interview, J. G. 1996). Since Sizemore was also a dominant provincial figure, he was certainly in a position to extend Byron’s influence to the province.
Sizemore's forceful style and his recent promotion to Director of the newly created South Board had created enemies. Byron was seen by many as part of the Sizemore agenda, and as such it experienced some of the ill-feelings derived from what dissident elements in the region considered a 'take-over'. They believed that Sizemore had created a school which threatened their values and beliefs, to say nothing of their organisational structures. A young teacher in one of the schools in a section of the region which felt it had been annexed by Middleton, and later a principal at Byron, recalled that the people at Byron were seen as:

The flower children of the 60s. That was the perception. They had this beautiful school that the Board had pumped all kinds of money into, selected the very best of the best to go there, and they were free floaters, free thinkers. They were literally likened to the flower children and some of that never went away (Interview B.K. 1994).

Many South staff members shared the view that Byron enjoyed unique benefits from the newly created school district - a new building, unrestricted staff recruitment, and more resources than other schools. The reality was quite different. Byron was not alone as a 'new' building. Significant growth within South County in the 1960s resulted in the building of five new secondary schools from 1965 to 1970. Bond had agreed to accept his share of teachers displaced by the building of Byron and some of them were not the 'best of the best'. In fact Bond's successor had to terminate the contract of one of the 'force transfer' people. Certainly the early staff members were not flower children. While the staff was young, its average age was approximately 28, a significant percentage were over thirty years of age and 90 per cent had some previous experience in
conventional schools. In addition, Byron received the same amount of money as any other school. Sizemore insisted that if Byron was to be credible it “must be within the budget listed for all other schools; it must be fair” (Interview, W.B. 1994). What Bond did do, however, was to use staff differently and reallocate resources. Only a few other schools accepted Sizemore’s offer to differentiate staff.

A persistent theme of Byron respondents was the antagonism they experienced or felt from other colleagues in the region. A young teacher in 1970, who was transferred to Byron after her first year of teaching, described this tension:

Because Byron was different and proud of being different, because it felt it was doing things for kids, the worst comments came from other schools. When I would ask them, they had never been to the school, had really never talked to anybody in the school. Rumour and the sense that these people at Byron were doing something different, all they wanted to hear were the negatives. They never heard the positives (Interview, C. S. 1993).

Bond found this rather “mindless” opposition confounding (Interview, W.B. 1993). When asked to identify the critics in the system he replied:

The whole gamut, the principals in other secondary schools, teachers in other secondary schools. Elementary schools tended very much to understand and support. There were ‘snipers’ in the community, some Board members. If I might make an attribution, the reason that most of it went on was that by virtue of what we were doing and changing without coming out and saying it, we were
saying you’re doing it wrong and that was offensive. Simply, people didn’t like the fact that we wanted to change all these things so they took ‘shots at us’. That was enormous pressure (Interview, W. B. 1994).

He went on to describe people’s reactions when he presented the initial concepts even before the building was completed:

> When I presented semestering and the new administrative structure and what we intended to do, to the Federation, the Board, the other secondary principals, they were resistant and certainly non-believers - open classrooms, my God! semester system, my God! no department heads, my God! chairmen, my God! They had to be convinced but most stood by as observers, some wanting ‘the wheels to fall off’. This made me more determined. This is going to work. Then the original staff came together and they all intuitively knew what we were heading towards. All the pieces began to fit together. Then people from the province and the provincial federation came and interviewed staff members to find out whether they were being ‘put upon’ and whether the scheme was working. There was that little undercurrent of hope that it wasn’t working, but the staff’s positiveness was very encouraging for me (Interview, W. B. 1994).

This reaction was understandable, because in the early 1970s Byron was a threat to the entire ‘grammar of schooling’ which gave meaning to the careers of system colleagues. An experienced teacher, widely respected by her colleagues for the academic rigour of her programmes, explained:
You didn’t admit you came from Byron because others called it ‘the palace’.

That was the nickname in other schools. “Oh, you teach in the palace”. They assumed you weren’t doing anything because it was O.K. with us for kids to work on the carpeted floor rather than at a desk. That was innovative at the time but not now. It was seen as shoddiness, lack of discipline, lack of control. Although the kids were working perfectly happily there, that really shocked people. It was not unusual for me to look up in the middle of a lesson and find a crowd of strangers in the back of the room because there were constant visitors to see what was going on (Interview, G. G. 1993).

This same teacher described a group’s discussion in which she and her pupils were engaged in animated and somewhat heated discussion about a moral issue arising from a novel. The teacher said, “I was really giving one young man a very hard time”. She recalled:

He was very calm; it was late in the course so we knew each other well and he was pretty confident and said to me “Miss G. that is a pile of bullshit” because if you look at this, this and this you can see - he did the right thing. Afterwards the group at the back said that boy’s words were rude. I said, “in what way was he rude?” One person said he said what you said was bullshit, and I replied did you listen to what I had said - it was bullshit! I would have nailed him if he hadn’t called it. They thought that was a lack of respect when in fact we were encouraging kids to be secure in their arguments and to stand for what they believed. There was a difference of perception, people in the community and other schools saw that as very threatening (Interview, G. G. 1993).
Hargreaves (1984) chronicled similar reactions to Countesthorpe College in England (Moon, 1983). Terms like ‘flower children’ and ‘the palace’ he described as “contrastive rhetoric” which “presents stylized and trivialized images of alternative practices, characterising them as unacceptable extremes and thereby implicitly drawing the boundaries around the range of present practice” (p.223). Contrastive rhetoric was a strategy used to stigmatise these alternatives by the insinuation of graphic labelling rather than rational argument. He suggests that this kind of ‘rhetoric’ is often used by school principals to “exercise control over the decisionmaking process” (p. 223). Both Bond and Martin testified to the barbed criticism they received from fellow school principals.

In fairness, however, as a Byron teacher at the time, contrastive rhetoric did not all flow one way. Extreme criticism of the other schools and principals was not unknown in the staff room at Byron. Certainly the contrastive rhetoric on both sides created unfortunate divisions within the school system. From the very beginning, therefore, what staff members at Byron perceived as unwarranted opposition, created a siege mentality. A number of respondents talked about how debilitating it was to be continually “fighting ghosts” (Byron Women’s Group). A teacher at Byron for all but its first year commented that he was “really tired” of arguing the merits of the Byron approach (Interview, G. L. 1996). This had two effects: first it created a determination to make the Byron concept work. As Bond stated, “This made me more determined. This is going to work” (Interview, W. B. 1994). He was not alone. Second, it resulted in Byron’s purposely isolating itself from the rest of the system and closing in upon itself. One of the members of the Women’s Group commented “Nobody outside the school supported it so we had to support each other” (Interview, Women’s Group, 1994). There is some evidence to
suggest that this collective introversion was not unique to Byron (Moon, 1983; Hargreaves et al, 1992).

The spectre of Roxborough

One and a half miles from Byron stood another secondary school, Roxborough, a well respected and rather typical school of its times. Continuity and change sat uneasily side by side for every one to see and compare. The staff at Roxborough made no secret of their contempt for Byron and its innovativeness. Its principal never referred to Byron by name but only as “that school down the road”. Ironically Roxborough had been the Byron of the early 1960s. In its own way it had been less traditional than other schools of the time. Its principal had recruited fine teachers and many, including the Assistant Director, had been promoted in the system. As Ed Laxton explained, even Roxborough had been resented because of its own newness and there was talk of the ‘Roxborough mafia’ in the early 1960s. Criticism was not unique to Byron in the region. What made the situation tense was the physical proximity of the two schools and Roxborough’s reputation as the ‘academic’ school. Like many schools in the 1960s and 1970s, Roxborough tended to sort and select its pupils. Conversely, Byron’s philosophy rejected this approach, and the school opened its doors to pupils who had not succeeded in other schools. Since most of these pupils were not high academic achievers they contributed to Byron’s reputation as a school for the non academic. As one teacher recalled “because Byron was such an open school, when things went wrong they usually ended up in the newspaper” (Interview, C. S. 1993). Many of Roxborough’s ‘push-outs’ ended up at Byron.
Sizemore had allowed two schools to develop, side by side with significantly different approaches to secondary education. He established Byron as a "pilot venture" or a "demonstration school" to shake up the system (Personal correspondence, J. G. June, 1996). Whatever his motivation, his plan resulted in intense competition between a well regarded traditional school and the avant garde school. "It has always been a Byron-Roxborough comparison, not Byron and any other school" (Interview, G. L. 1996).

In the early years, from 1970 to 1975, Byron people tended to ignore Roxborough. For the most part, the Byron staff was more worried about daily survival than a contest with other schools. The insularity of Byron was often interpreted as arrogance (Interview, B.F. 1996). What was particularly damaging was the manner in which colleagues within the system undermined Byron with its parent community. The impact of Roxborough on Byron is described by a teacher who formerly taught at Roxborough before she moved to Byron in 1972:

"Until the last few years this school (Byron) has been on the defensive. Most of that came, I would say, as a response to the school down the road. In the beginning, a large percentage of staff came from the school down the road. We never said that we were better, but down there they certainly did. They said it to parents, they said it to students, they said it to anyone who would listen. I've known many of them since I was a kid, they are good people - they thought that they were right (Interview, J. C. 1993)."

Byron became stigmatised as the non-traditional, non-academic school - a legacy which still haunts it 25 years later.
The ‘Achilles Heel’ - the community

The Byron community first found out about the Byron plan through a series of meetings Bond conducted in the community. As he described the process:

Before the school opened we had 14 meetings. We talked about what we were doing and why we were doing it until we were satisfied that they understood. The way in which the school was opened to people in the community, and we took great pains to bring people into the school, we shaped our own destiny. The thing that was different then, was there was a great deal of growth and that gave the opportunity to change. People tended to look for change. It was always interesting to me to note the people of the community who had accepted the opportunity and invitation to be in the school and see what was going on, were very excited. Once they took the trouble to understand then they became very accepting. Quite often the comment was made ‘I wish it had been like this when I was in school’. The many adult students who came and took classes said ‘I wish it had been this way’. The more they saw, the more they understood (Interview, W. B. 1994).

A fundamental principle of the school was not only to reach out to the community but also to include the community in the school. Byron had the first active parents’ advisory committee in South, and adult participation as pupils in regular classes. In comparison to other schools, Byron was much more open, inviting, and parent-friendly. In 1975, the
External Evaluation Committee stated: “In its relations with the community . . . Lord Byron is a model worthy of study by other schools” (p. 27).

In contrast to this glowing testimonial, however, many members of the public remained sceptical. Criticism was muted because of Bond’s political skills and the smoothness with which the school operated in the first few years. In spite of the best efforts of Bond, and his colleagues however, the community never totally ‘bought’ the concept. A perceptive teacher identified the crucial issue. In her view:

we encouraged the students to take leadership and initiative. I think that came out of the openness that we had with them, but a lot of people saw that as intimidating. These kids were taking too much power, so in many cases the community saw it as kids getting out of line when in fact we saw it as kids growing up (Interview, G. G. 1993).

Another teacher provided a succinct and insightful summary:

I think one of the problems Byron had is that very good things were happening but the public didn’t necessarily understand the changes and changes which are not understood are perceived negatively. It takes a long time to change an existing perception once it’s in the public’s mind (Interview, M. H. 1993).

Tyack and Tobin (1994) provide two reasons to explain the difficulty of changing the ‘grammar of schooling’. Both are appropriate to Lord Byron. Most reforms tend to be ‘intramural’. This was certainly true of the Byron experience. It evolved from Sizemore
to an Innovations Committee, to Bond, and to the staff, with virtually no involvement of people outside this limited network of educational professionals. Based on Cremin’s (1962) work on progressive education, Tyack and Tobin (1994) explain the failure of most reform efforts:

one reason . . . was that leaders lacked political savvy and fell out of touch with the opinions of school boards and parents. Looking to convince their professional peers, they did not cultivate the kind of broader social movement that might nourish educational and social change. Failure to enlist the support and ideas of the community was especially harmful for fundamental reforms that violated the public’s notions of a ‘real school’ (p. 477).

The second problem they identify is the burnout of reformers. This became an increasing problem for Byron. Two of the major causes for this burnout were the failure to gain community support, and the presence of Roxborough. People were working themselves to exhaustion on behalf of their pupils while the pupils’ parents, the teachers’ colleagues and the larger community sat back and criticised. Wesley Walters’ frustration was typical:

I had ideas in 1970 that I thought as I worked through them were validated at the school but I wasn’t sure. There was an immense amount of criticism. We were innovative but didn’t have the support of people in the field and didn’t have the body of data we have now that validated what we were doing (Interview, W. W. 1995).
In many ways the response of Lord Byron’s external context in its early years made the internal context even more meaningful than it might otherwise have been. I well recall how we turned to each other for mutual support and reassurance that we were indeed on the right track. In Chapter Three I identified the pupils, departments and subjects, and the school itself as important contextual elements within any school, and of particular relevance to Lord Byron. The following discussions of the school’s meaning, structure, culture and the work and lives of its teachers will elaborate each of these aspects of Byron’s internal context.

Meaning

In spite of opposition, criticism and disappointment, what has persisted over these past 25 years is a collective sense of meaning of what Lord Byron was about. Every person interviewed for this project articulated two concepts: Byron was intended to shape the school to the pupil not the reverse, and Byron was about innovating, experimenting, and challenging the prevailing paradigm in Ontario. Regardless of time period, longevity at Byron, or the role the person performed at Byron, these messages were fundamentally the same. A long standing school secretary said: “Byron puts students first - mutual respect, co-operation and the intermingling of different types of kids. There has always been that” (Interview, H.C.1993).

A technical teacher who taught from 1972 to 1976 at Byron and whose two sons attended said Byron created a “positive environment, in which kids could reach their potential” (Interview, E. E. 1993). Another teacher indicated that Byron “provided a breadth and depth of opportunities without barriers to students” and “much better
teacher-student relationships than I have seen in any other school” (Interview P. G., 1993). Wesley Walters who was both an original chair and later Byron’s principal said that Byron was about:

- different strokes for different folks - individualisation - treating kids with intricate sensibilities. I used the term ‘structured multiplicity’ where you take a group of kids in grade 9 and you develop a programme to develop the talents of each pupil to its best (Interview W. W. 1995).

A teacher who has remained at Byron for the past 23 years explained that the school’s philosophy was:

- that you had to be able to answer the question is this good for the students in the affirmative in order to justify actions. There were sort of a peripheral things like fewer rules, and that you teach more by modelling than you do by precept, and that the aim of all discipline was self discipline . . . the idea was to offer kids a choice, and when they make a choice they make mistakes. Some of those mistakes are going to be wrong and you have to be prepared to live with that, if you can’t then you modify your programme to limit the number of choices (Interview, J. C. 1993).

Various respondents described Byron as “a second chance school”, a school which believed in the “goodness of kids”, which “emphasised co-operation not competition” and “learning not just teaching”.

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At a second level, Lord Byron was intended to challenge the prevailing paradigm of secondary schooling in Ontario. As Bond explained:

... what made it unique in the eyes of others in the community and education generally was that it was the first semestered school in the province. That was the most obvious mechanical thing and then the philosophy that was designed to surround that. The philosophy included how staff and pupils should be treated; the environment in which they should work. We were all there to enable all pupils to learn, to remove obstacles, to remove their problems and to prove to them that they could learn. We did not convey the idea that discipline comes first which I think a lot of us felt was the attitude in many other schools. In addition the school was open in design and open in attitude as well. Our intention with regard to the community was to welcome the community at any and to invite them to participate at any time in what was going on in the school. This was unique at the time (Interview, W. B. 1994).

In response to my first interview question, “What do you feel has made Byron unique among schools in South and the Province?” virtually every respondent, regardless of teaching era noted the pupil-first philosophy. When asked to articulate factors which challenged the prevailing educational paradigm, most mentioned semistering, open concept building design, the chairmanship leadership structure, the variety of course offerings, the innovative programmes such as individualised mathematics and science, the paucity of rules and the unsupervised cafeteria, to mention only a few innovations. Each change on its own was not unique. In combination they challenged the essential ‘grammar’ of secondary schools in Ontario.
What became clear as my interviews proceeded was the influence of Ward Bond in shaping the 'meaning' of Lord Byron. As one teacher recalled, "Ward Bond would say, when you find them doing something wrong, pick them up, dust them off and start them out again, don’t throw them out" (Interview, C. S. 1993). Still another teacher recalled that Bond "had a student oriented view of education that was unique at the time" (Interview, R. M. 1993). Bond described his vision in this way:

> It was largely wrapped around our aspirations for students. We wanted them to be self learners. We wanted them to realise what potential they had, and we approached it from the view that we weren’t imparting all the answers to the students and they were responsible for sitting down and learning. It was that belief in students, and that belief in the approach to help students to learn, that encompass the philosophy or at least our attitude as to how things should be. This was perceived at the time as a more lenient attitude as we were trying to engage the students in their learning. We also had distinct ideas as to how people should be treated (Interview, W. B. 1994).

While Bond articulated the original vision, it was shaped by the people he recruited as they tried to bring it to life in the school. As Senge suggests (1990), organisational visions grow as a by-product of individual visions and ongoing conversations among them (p. 212).

The congruency between vision and action is illustrated by perhaps the most controversial concept at Byron in its first eight years, the provision of free time for all pupils. The belief
held by Bond and most staff in the early years was that if pupils were to be responsible they must be given responsibility to make decisions, and particularly decisions over their use of time. Bond’s explanation of that policy reflected his faith in pupils’ ability to use good sense provided the environment was non-threatening and supportive.

We provided access to the learning resource centre, study spaces around the school, the remedial reading room and teachers. We all know it did not succeed with all students. There were abuses which in other schools would have led to regimentation of all the pupils. We did have a belief that students needed some unstructured time during the course of the day, and I don’t believe as a total staff we believed their use was improper. We didn’t mind students in the hallway. The design of the school facilitated that. It was structured to provide socialising space (Interview, W. B. 1994).

As Bond suggests staff acted on the premise that most pupils could use time productively and adapted facilities and developed strategies to assist pupils to use their time effectively.

What Bond did particularly well was to manage meaning (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Fullan, 1991). The sense of meaning initiated by Bond but internalised and acted upon by Byron’s staff encouraged integration, co-operation, responsiveness to individual needs and alternative ways of knowing such as intuition, all of which may be considered more stereotypically feminine qualities. Pupil use of free time, to continue with this example, was an innovation for which there was little precedent in Ontario at the time. Pure rationality would suggest that such a policy was asking for trouble. Bond felt that it was
worth the risk as a way to give pupils the opportunity to learn responsibility by having important decisions to make.

The values espoused by the Lord Byron staff were clearly at odds with the self-asserted patriarchal values which dominated Ontario and South’s educational systems. Most schools and school systems encouraged and rewarded power, competition, control, domination, and linear analytic rational thought. The South system was a very male-dominated, patriarchal system (Interview, J.C., 1993). All the senior leaders were male, all but two of the curriculum co-ordinators were male. The prevailing metaphors were those of male dominated team sports like football. A favourite saying to encourage hard work was, “If you’re not ruptured, you’re not pulling your load”. Ironically, it was Bond, a former intercollegiate athlete and physical education instructor who had the confidence and inner resolve to ‘go against the grain’. As a system leader stated, “Ward was the father of Lord Byron; he nurtured it in the years he was there. He had the skill and the craftiness to hire the right people” (Interview, E. S. L. 1994). Equally ironic was the fact that all of his first department chairs were men. When asked about his choices, he said no qualified women applied, which spoke eloquently to the state of women’s leadership in South at that time.

The values espoused at Byron were of course influenced by the 1960s. Nascent feminism, multi-culturalism, and environmentalism had gained currency. Phrases like ‘self actualisation’ and ‘human potential’ were part of the educational climate. The Hall-Dennis report, for a short time, made such ideas the topics of conferences and seminars, and of course criticism and ridicule in the popular press.
A few schools around the province acted upon the concepts of more open education. Thornlea (Fullan et al, 1972) in Toronto predated Byron by three years, and Bayridge (Fullan and Eastabrook, 1977) in Hastings County and Governor Simcoe in Lincoln County followed a few years after the establishment of Byron. In retrospect we can see manifestations of a humanist response to the rigidity and inflexibility of the ‘factory-model of schooling’ (Reich, 1991), but at the time most people still believed in the profoundly modernist conception of progress - if we can just know more about the world, and in this case education, progress would result.

The frustration expressed by many of the Byron respondents, many years removed from events, was that they were certain they were moving in the right direction but could not prove it. Much of what went on at Byron was the product of people’s experience, intuition and trial and error, rather than ‘solid empirical research’. There were mistakes made, which in other less visible settings would have been ignored, or at least used as internal learning experiences. Byron tended to be so visible, public, and open that its missteps were magnified and publicised. As one long serving teacher recalled, “Being so open, the failures that kids had, and they probably would have failed in other schools, were quickly blamed on Byron”. ‘They are experimenting with my child and that is why my child has failed’ and we were quick to be blamed for things that were not necessarily our fault” (Interview, G. L. 1995). Other elements of the educational community, such as superintendents, other principals, teachers, and even the press (Interview, W. W. 1995) criticised Byron for its lack of ‘hard data’ to support its innovations, which resulted in Byron’s being almost obsessive about evaluating its efforts.
To use Brouilette's (1996) categories described previously, Byron might be categorised as fitting into the 'developmental' category because of its stated goals of advancing the academic and social growth of each pupil. The critics tended to speak from a 'humanist' perspective. They believed that the purpose of schools was the preservation of the dominant culture, and a focus on the basics. Their criticism of Byron was consistent with Brouilette's description of the humanists' view of the developmentalist approach to education - lack of discipline, inappropriate pupil choice-making, a lack of respect in teacher-pupil relationships, concern for the arts and other non 'hard-core' subjects, a lack of competitiveness among pupils, and a perceived deficiency in standards.

What Bond had succeeded in doing was recruiting people who supported his progressive developmentalist view of education. Acting on this image for education required a profound shift in thinking in the school and its community. While Bond and his colleagues succeeded within the school, they faced a wider educational community and a social hegemony which were firmly rooted in maintaining continuity with what most people perceived to be 'real schools'.

Leadership

In many ways Ward Bond was an amalgam of the leadership types described in Appendix Three. Perhaps the best description of his leadership was as a 'leader of leaders' (Barth, 1990). He firmly believed that he should lead less, and disperse power, control, and resources to enable staff, students, and parents to lead more. In secondary schools, micro-political tension usually exists among the senior leadership team, the department heads, or chairs, and the staff as a whole (Ball, 1987). Managing balancing these three
elements in such a way as to ensure everyone’s needs are met is a challenging balancing act for a principal.

Bond believed strongly that formal leadership should reside in the department chairs. When asked the source of leadership at Byron in the early days he responded:

There is no doubt in my mind it was the chair. Leadership was one of the elements considered when the chairman was chosen, and I believe it was an expectation that they understood, it was to be their leadership and their school, and in their areas they had control of programming and instruction.

He went on to add:

I don’t think that major decisions should go back to the staff. There should be complete involvement where that can be possible, but unless you can couple the accountability with the decision-making, I don’t see total decisions resting with the staff . . . the accountable person is the one who has to end up saying I made the decision . . . In talking about leadership and the leadership provided, I think it is expecting too much of teachers to do more than have input into decision when the decision lies outside their realm of practice - but in the classroom, management, instruction, programme, curriculum design, sure . . . One of the significant factors was that chairmen had time to provide leadership to the people with whom they worked . . . it demonstrated to me if you have an expectation for leadership you have to provide time to do the job (Interview, W. B. 1993).
Bond’s vision of the chairs’ role was shared and supported by staff. In the words of one long serving member of staff:

The thing that made Byron unique in the early days was the use of staff, the enthusiasm of the staff and the fact that they were chosen specifically to open a new school, and they were given a mandate to be creative . . . They had a different staffing formula which enabled the principal to flexibly designate staff which other schools couldn’t do . . . If you offer people time, then they can use their expertise to write curriculum and go into classrooms and show other people models of how to teach and that was really exciting. Chairs would also free you up to visit other teachers . . . My first chair was Bev Doubleday who was the ultimate in positive reinforcement. Bev could find good in anything . . . she was very good at finding your strengths and exploiting them . . . she was great and the rest of the department was the same (Interview, J. C. 1993).

Each chair was hired to and expected to demonstrate leadership, particularly instructional leadership in his area (Smith and Andrews, 1989). The chairs acted as an effective cabinet as Bond had intended. As one teacher, now a principal recalled:

I think one thing that was significant was how Byron was organised. I came through as a department head in another jurisdiction. The way the chairs functioned at Byron as a council gave immediately an accessible leadership target to people because those people did meaningful things . . . (Interview, J. B. 1994).
At the same time, staff, especially those who had experience in other schools, felt involved and committed to the process of staff participation in decision-making. One teacher who is well known for her intolerance of pretence reported that:

Everybody knew what was important and again part of the leadership qualities of Ward Bond was that he didn’t lay on ‘nit-picking’ things - staff meetings were not called the first Monday of every month whether you needed them or not. They were called when you needed them. You didn’t have trouble getting staff members there, they knew it was important . . . Now you think oh God! another staff meeting. It never occurred to say oh God! a staff meeting . . . there was something that was going to come out of it (Interview, G. G. 1993).

She went on to add:

I am not a hero worshipper but when I look back, he had a quiet leadership style rather than a really aggressive one, but I think his encouragement made people want to follow. In fact, he tended to make leaders rather than followers. He would ask pertinent questions and lead you down the path to start something new . . . he assumed you would do a top notch job and you did. You tended to live up to expectations (Interview, G. G. 1993).

Bond succeeded in his tenure in ensuring a balance among potentially competing micro-political components of the school. In its comment on leadership in the 1975 evaluation of Lord Byron, the external committee observed:
the extensive opportunities for school-wide leadership development were understated in the internal report. As well as observing those in formal positions (principal, vice principals, chairmen) exercise enlightened leadership, we noted that teachers are able to contribute significantly to the decision-making process, not only within the departmental structure. The administration has consciously provided opportunities for recognition of leadership among staff, other than those formally designated as chairmen. This approach has not only guaranteed high quality leadership within the school, but has served as a training ground for an exceptional number of persons who have moved on to positions of leadership within the system (Report of Lord Byron Evaluation Committee, 1975, p. 20).

The report concluded its discussion of leadership by commending the school “for its effective leadership development program” (p. 20). Bond was indeed a ‘leader of leaders’.

Bond, of course was not only a visionary leader. He had the interpersonal skills to build a shared sense of meaning. People used words and phrases like ‘charismatic’, ‘revered’, and ‘the perfect person’ to describe Bond. He could be “crafty” and “tough” if necessary (Interview, E. L., 1994), or “quiet and caring” (Interview C. S., 1993). He could be both a transactional leader as his wringing concessions from central office attests (Interview, E. L. 1994) and a transformational leader (Leithwood, 1993) as his many disciples confirm. I asked each respondent to name the heroes in the school. Virtually every person named Bond, even people who had never met him. He would fit the description of the invitational leader who invited others both personally and professionally (Stoll and Fink, 1996).
Ironically, perhaps the members of staff most influenced by Bond and his leadership style were the women. One evening I recorded the comments of a female group of seven former Byron staff members who have all moved on to leadership roles in South or in other systems. In the room was a director of education, two principals, three department heads and a consultant. They were part of a larger women’s network which had emerged from Lord Byron in the early 1970s. They still try to meet at least six times a year. The group has not only been instrumental in helping women to achieve formal leadership roles, it has impacted significantly on the culture of South. One woman remembered seeing the chairs work as a council to solve problems in a collaborative way and saying to herself “I can do that”. “It was more collaborative and there was discussion. It wasn’t a decision made by a principal, which everybody carried out. My guess is that women are good at that kind of leadership and prefer it” (Byron Women’s group, 1994). Another participant stated:

Ward had a philosophy but he was open to anybody’s input. I remember it was significant that he was going to let women wear pant suits. I just remember it being an issue for working women. You just had a sense if you took something to him, an idea, it was going to be heard. I think that in three years we were willing to say as women ‘we must go further’. I almost felt that was the ethos that was there - readiness to accept and an invitation to proceed (Interview, Byron Women’s Group, 1994).

Few women in the 1970s sought leadership roles, partly because of the prevailing patriarchal value system of most schools and school districts. As the women explained,
they felt comfortable, affirmed and empowered to aspire to formal leadership roles as a result of Bond’s leadership and the value system which gave meaning to the Byron experience. When I pointed out that it took four years to appoint the first female chair and that the original complement recruited by Bond was entirely male, one of the women’s group commented:

Yes, but look at those males. If you go back and look at the leadership within that school over the years . . . they have an acceptance of females and an acceptance that they treated you as equals and you never had the feeling that you were anything less, in fact you were encouraged to be more - I think that is a really important and significant difference from other schools. I was head of the largest department at Roxborough before I came to Byron and I worked hard to be the best because they expected you not to be the best. At Byron you were expected to be the best and you were the best (Interview, B. K. 1994).

Paradoxically, it was a ‘critical incident’ (Ball and Goodson, 1985) related to the departure of Bond from Byron after three and a half years as principal that galvanised the women to organise a network to attend to women’s issues. When Bond was promoted, the male staff members organised a two day ‘men only’ stag party at farms a number of staff members owned in northern Ontario. The women were incensed that an event for Bond was planned strictly by the men. As one woman recalled “We felt respected and our individuality was important to us and he was important to us as well” (Interview, C. S. 1993). A woman who is presently a principal in South recently recalled:

The main issue was that it was exclusive to men. It was the major social
activity planned by the group to honour Wade, and no women were part of it because there were no women on the leadership team. It was the catalyst that got us talking together about not being part of decision making. It was a very symbolic representation of the fact that we, as women, were not considered part of the decision-making because we were not in formal leadership positions, and that we were the only ones who were going to do anything about that. We certainly felt valued as staff members, but were not encouraged by our male leaders to take on formal leadership, and that was where things were happening - so we decided to set up our own leadership, encouragement, training and support group, because we felt the other groups were not open to us. So it was a case of experiencing a need, talking about it and doing something about it (Interview J. B. 1997).

They organised an alternative event to which they invited all staff members and their spouses. The success of this event and the enjoyment of working together to achieve a goal led to subsequent meetings.

They helped each other professionally and personally. They were there for each other at the 'birthing of babies' and the seeking of advancement. Since there were no women in the chairs group for instance, they asked why not, and encouraged their colleagues to apply, which over the next few years many did with success. Of the present nine department heads (chairs) six are women. One male staff member said he really envied the women's group "because they really talked about interesting things". Since the group had a tradition of doing a quilt for the birth of each member's new child, this male member joined them after the group made a quilt for his new-born. Sexist jokes and gender based language were discouraged at Byron by men and women alike. The
movement spread throughout the district. In the early 1980s, two members of the group, the aforementioned male and a female leader, helped to found an organisation in South called ‘Men and Women in South’ which dealt with gender based issues in the region. One of its successes was a Board policy on inclusive language and a review of curriculum to ensure gender equity. Bond and the ethos of Lord Byron had supported and empowered women to create a network which engendered the kind of self confidence required to pursue leadership opportunities. This is quite different from the scenarios described in Chapter Three by Shakeshaft in the United States (1993) and Edwards in the United Kingdom (1994).

Bond’s impact on both male and female leaders in South was profound. The staff of Byron in its first five years produced two directors, three superintendents, ten principals, four vice principals and a number of consultants and department chairs. In fact the rest of the South system often referred to the ‘Byron mafia’. Virtually all of the ‘mafia’ have tended to lead in Bond’s image. I can trace much of my own leadership style and subsequent writing on the topic (Fink, 1992; Stoll and Fink, 1996) to my three years with Ward Bond. A woman who has been principal in two secondary schools reflected:

I think the thing that Ward taught me was to be a leader, to keep positive, listen to people’s ideas and offer ideas. I remember Ward walking into my office handing me an article, quite unrelated to my job and saying what do you think of this? He would come back later and talk to me about it (Byron Women’s Group, 1994).
To a number of respondents, Bond's premature departure was the major factor in the attrition of change at Byron. A former system's leader observed that “Byron changed the month and day that Ward left” (Interview, E. L. 1993). A former chairman with Bond used almost the same words when he stated “the shift came down to the month, if not the day that Ward left” (Interview, W. W. 1995). One teacher felt “somewhat betrayed” because three years “was not enough with his kind of leadership when you are trying to make change” (Interview, G. G. 1993). Still another teacher reflected that Bond had such a powerful persona, that he “was an almost impossible act to follow” (Interview, C. S. 1993).

Bond admittedly enjoyed unique circumstances. He not only had a year to plan the structures of the school; he was able to recruit staff members to his vision. He opened a school of 900 pupils and when he left it was still only 1200 pupils. This compares to the more than 2000 pupils who would attend the school by 1976. There is little doubt that he encouraged and benefited from the influence in the school of the well-known ‘Hawthorne effect’. He enjoyed the support of central office and was able to bask in the spotlight of provincial and national interest. At the same time, it would be difficult to diminish his stature among the staff and much of the parent and pupil community. While his style was not in the ‘heroic’ tradition (Senge, 1990, p. 340), the significance of the Byron experience in the lives of so many people who became influential in the South system led to a mythology around Ward Bond which indeed made succeeding him exceedingly difficult. Principals who came to Byron 20 years after Bond's departure felt they were being measured against Bond’s mythic persona. As one respondent who had taught at Byron long after Bond had left reported:
He still walked the halls when I got there. I never saw the man for years, but the way people talked about him and the references to what he had done that helped people be the way they were, they were legion. People were always turning to me in great shock and saying “oh you don’t know him, your style is like you know him” (Byron Women’s Group, 1993).

Bond created a strong leadership group. The chairs saw themselves as mini-principals and with Bond, made most of the major policy decisions. Over Bond’s tenure the chairmen grew so collegial, collaborative and confident of the ‘Byron approach’ that the potential for ‘groupthink’ existed (Janis, 1972). Groupthink occurs in highly collegial groups in which participants will often accept decision with which they disagree or at least mute dissent, in order to be perceived as a team player. Typically, Bond was aware of this possibility and shared copies of Janis’ book with the chair’s group and discussed its implications with them. This tendency lay dormant under Bond. As external criticism increased over time, groupthink was to contribute to Byron’s isolation in the system.

Since the school was relatively small, Bond was able to involve staff in providing input to decisions and to communicate directly with the entire staff. He was able to spend time both informally and formally with staff members. He always said “I do people things during the day and paper things at night”. He often said that “he would know when he had succeeded when he worked himself out of a job”. Bond had skilfully shaped the micro-political balance in productive ways. In the process he created a group of chairs who saw themselves as wholly involved in running the school and similarly a staff which felt totally involved and consulted.
The paradox of leadership for new schools is that new, innovative schools appear to require exceptional leadership. All respondents agreed that Bond was an exceptional leader and very difficult, if not impossible to replace. Conversely, as Hargreaves and his colleagues (1996) have suggested, exceptional leaders can often create problems for their successors, which can negatively affect the school in the long run. The power of the Bond ‘persona’ and the delicate decision-making balance that he left would prove to be difficult challenges for future principals.

Structure

To achieve his vision of a school which was sufficiently flexible to meet the diverse needs of pupils, Bond created an organisational structure which was intended to alter conventional uses of time and space. To use the terminology of Tyack and Tobin (1994), he intended to create a very different ‘grammar of schooling’, which they describe as:

... the regular structures and rules that organise the work of instruction. Here we have in mind ... standardised organisational practices in dividing time and space, classifying students and allocating them to classrooms, and splintering knowledge into ‘subjects’ (p. 454).

Bond recognised that to change the ‘grammar of schooling’ he had to view Byron as more than a bundle of innovations. He had to begin with a vision of what education was about, design structures which facilitated that vision, hire staff members who could bring the vision to life and finally work with the architects to design a facility which would encourage the work and the learning of the staff and pupils (Interview, W. B. 1994). At
the same time there were certain ‘grammatical conventions’ such as credits, credit hours, subjects, department structures among others which were determined by forces outside the school like the Ministry of Education, the Board and the teachers’ federation, that had to be accommodated. While he had much more freedom to organise his school and to hire staff than do contemporary principals, he did not have ‘carte blanche’ and had to be clever to work around externally imposed impediments.

He began with the concept of time (Harvey, 1989; Donohoe; 1993; Hargreaves, 1994) - time for teachers to teach, time for leaders to lead, and time for pupils to learn, experience, make choices, and socialise. His answer was to semester the school, design a 32 credit diploma, and a one hour teaching period. Pupils had an individualised timetable which required that they take eight subjects per year, and four per semester. As one teacher recalled:

I am looking back 20 years, and I still think those kids were the best educated kids, simply because they had such a broad base and they were able to overlap. It was not unusual for a kid to do a project where he or she took the information from the music course, maybe in Renaissance music, brought it into English class and combined the music, with Renaissance literature and history to complete a given project (Interview, G. G. 1993).

Since each pupil’s minimum requirement was four classes out of a six period day, pupils could choose to use the non-lunch period to accelerate their programme by taking an additional course, use it to pick up a failed course from a previous semester or as a free period. The structure provided flexibility and also the opportunity to make choices.
Teachers had the same timetable which gave them four classes to prepare for at any one time compared with six in every other school in South. At the same time, they had one hour classes not the traditional 40 minutes. It was thought that longer periods would oblige teachers to use a greater variety of teaching strategies to utilise the additional time effectively. It also gave teachers the time to provide more individualised attention for pupils in non-streamed classes. Department chairs taught two classes per day and had three periods available for leadership activities.

In establishing the initial organisation of the school, Bond with the advice of the Innovations Committee, not only thought about altering time patterns for teachers and pupils but also looked at the use of space (Harvey 1989; Rosenau, 1992). He worked with the school’s architect, system consultants, and those chairmen and staff members that he was able to hire before the school opened to design a physical facility to accommodate flexible teaching strategies, teacher collaboration, interdisciplinary learning, individualised pupil timetables, and pupil free time. Every teacher had a desk in a work room for private preparation. Each interdisciplinary department like the Social Sciences Department had a workroom in which meetings could be held or teachers could collaborate on joint projects. As one teacher recalled:

One of the wonderful things about this school was that they had wonderful department work rooms where you could store material. It used to be in other schools that you ‘held court’ in your classroom, where you also kept all your stuff. We didn’t do that. We moved from classroom to classroom. In the English area, the books for the courses were stored in one room so you may have
three classes you taught in so you needed a workroom. That was a philosophical thing that was supported by the architecture (Interview, J. C. 1993).

A large comfortable staff room was also designed to encourage informal staff socialisation and discussions. This was the one place where coffee was available. An English teacher recalling the debates in the staff room exclaimed, “those were wonderful, I learned so much” (Interview, J. C. 1996). The resource centre was accessible from all parts of the school. As one teacher remarked, “The resource centre was a hub, that was a real resource centre” (Byron Women’s Group, 1994). A teacher who is still at Byron after 23 years compared the architecture of Byron to that of Roxborough:

The architecture has an enormous amount to do with the kind of school you run. If you build a school like this and put lockers in the foyer upstairs and downstairs, then you let kids go to their lockers between classes because it doesn’t disturb classes. A school like Roxborough, all the lockers are outside someone’s door, you have to limit access. The poor kid that forgets his books is ‘dogmeat’ (Interview, J. C. 1993).

Perhaps the most controversial feature was the openness of the school. Open concept had been tried and perceived to have succeeded in elementary schools by the professionals but parents were still suspicious (Interview, J. P. 1996). Open space in a secondary school was largely untried in Ontario. Some saw it as a real asset:

The open concept was so important because the walls were so flimsy and there were few doors, people wandered in and out. You couldn’t be ignorant of what
people were doing because it impinged upon your space all the time. Nor could you run a class that wasn’t working or where kids misbehaved. There was responsibility to one another (Byron Women’s group, 1994).

Others were not so sure. One teacher who left Byron for Roxborough felt the open concept worked against innovation because it was difficult to use strategies which might be noisy (Interview, R.M. 1993). Another teacher felt that open concept “did not work well”. She remembered:

> teaching at Byron with six classes in the open area and it got to be a bit of a competition of noise and you are trying to override the noise in other areas . . . If you wanted kids to discuss in groups and they got into an argument, that became very disruptive for another class to have an argument going on (Interview, G. G. 1993).

With alterations to time and space, Bond added the third piece which was the use of resources, both human and material. It was Bond who introduced differentiated staffing, augmented guidance (pastoral care) resources to help pupils make choices, reduced the number of formal leaders, created a chair in community relations, and structured interdisciplinary departments. Rather than utilising teachers in formal supervision of pupils in hallways and the cafeteria, he encouraged incidental supervision in which staff spent time talking to pupils in the foyer or cafeteria. Teachers ate their lunch in the main cafeteria which eliminated the need for ‘laid-on’ supervision.
The thousands of visitors found when they visited in the early years a relaxed, informal ethos, in which teachers and pupils mingled quite naturally and usually productively. The external committee for the 1975 evaluation of Lord Byron commented that the school has made “significant progress towards achieving the overall goal of creating a humane environment for pupils” (p. 11). A system superintendent recalled that in his first visit to the school he walked into the cafeteria and asked who was supervising? When he was told no one, he was amazed. He said it was the most orderly secondary school cafeteria he had ever seen (Interview, J. G. 1996). To many in the educational and parent communities, this was not, however, the ‘grammar’ of a ‘real school’. As long as Byron’s use of time, space, and staff worked in concert, the system worked well for pupils and teachers, but each of these innovations pushed too far or removed from its original context had the potential to produce problems as many of them eventually did, and as many of the critics were only too ready to point out.

Culture

As the discussion in Chapter Three suggests, structure and culture are inextricably linked. It is insufficient to alter structures without considering the impact of such changes on the schools culture. Fullan (1993) suggests that in most change efforts in established schools, “it is much more powerful when teachers and administrators begin working in new ways only to discover that school structures are ill-fitted to the new orientation and must be altered” (p. 68). New schools such as Byron have a unique opportunity to create structures and also to create a school culture where none had previously existed. The challenge for Bond was to design structures which would contribute to his vision of a pupil-oriented school and a culture in which teachers work together to provide each pupil
experiences. There are however, no guarantees - changing structures does not necessarily create predictable cultures. Culture is so subtle that two schools with exactly the same structures can have quite different cultures (Schein, 1985).

Bond, however, had one other advantage that principals of established schools do not; he could hire most of his staff. By communicating his sense of meaning for the school, designing a physical and organisational structure based on this vision and then recruiting appropriately, he was able to encourage a culture which was at once collaborative while recognising and encouraging individual differences.

A collaborative culture

Deal and Kennedy (1982) describe culture “as the way we do things around here”. Over the first five years of Byron’s development some fairly distinctive patterns of group behaviour emerged which, taken together, fit Hargreaves (1994) description of a collaborative culture rather well. The following discussion describes these patterns, and then employs three different typologies from Chapter Three on culture to attempt to draw some conclusions.

A key difference between moving schools and stuck schools “lies deep within the organizational goals: whether or not they exist, how they are defined and manifested, the extent to which they are mutually shared” (Rosenholtz, 1989, p.13). The consistency and
repetitiveness with which Lord Byron respondents, quite removed in time and space from Byron, articulated its original goals and directions were quite astonishing. Before I began this work I had always thought that Byron may have prospered more over the years if the original staff had developed a mission statement and a set of written goals. Such an activity would have been redundant. If Byron lost momentum over time, it was not because of a lack of clarity of goals. As one very experienced teacher who left Byron shortly after Bond departed because she felt the school’s tone had changed recalled:

Byron kids came in and the staff were saying we are all here for one purpose, we are all here for a common goal. Kids were also empowered. At the end of a course they were encouraged to evaluate and talk about things and they got to the point where they could offer very constructive criticism. Sometimes they just needed to know why they were doing certain things. I found that really good so that they had a sense of a common goal. It is not abdicating power it’s just working together rather than separately. We were told that we were going to get rough kids when the school opened. They came from rough areas and these were not ideal kids to be starting a new school with and yet they were wonderful and very encouraging and very helpful.

She went on to explain that pupils in her present school are not as well educated because government requirements have narrowed the programmes for pupils. She added that her present pupils:

don’t have the same attitude. Partly at Byron the staff attitude was infectious because the staff was hired to a purpose and had a goal and a mission. Whereas
now the staff here does not have any particular purpose or goal and so they have different priorities in life. We can’t get the staff to agree on anything including enforcing school rules. We didn’t have that problem at Byron (Interview, G. G. 1993).

A present day principal in the Women’s Group believed the difference between Byron and most schools then and now was that “in the beginning of Byron, we knew where we were heading, we knew what the bottom line was, and we knew our scope within there” (Byron Women’s Group, 1994). This ‘bottom line’ focused directly on pupils’ academic and social growth and development.

A major tenet of the effective schools literature is that all pupils can learn and achieve (Edmonds, 1979). Schools which make a difference for pupils have positive expectations for all pupils (Mortimore et al, 1988). This optimism is vital to any reform process if it is to have a chance to succeed. As Joyce and Murphy (1990) state:

School improvement efforts depend on the belief that curriculum, instruction, and social climate affect student learning. If the culture of a school is permeated with a belief that the causes of student learning lie largely outside the school, in the genes and social background of the students, school improvement efforts appear hopeless and even ridiculous (p. 248).

I asked each person I interviewed to relay a story which they thought typified Lord Byron. Over 80 per cent of the stories had to do with how the school contributed to the development of its pupils. The following three stories illustrate the point. Ward Bond
recalled a young pupil who had been ejected from the local vocational school for fighting. No other school would take him, but Byron did. In Bond's words:

Russ was a kid who would not have survived in any other school. He is now a responsible citizen and well known in his own way. The thing that springs to mind was Wesley Walters' phoning him every morning, so he was sure to get up, and then driving around on many occasions and picking him up and bringing him to school and spending a lot of time one on one getting to know him so he could find something that would keep him in school. I know that kind of thing was played out many times in different degrees. That to me typified and reinforced the philosophy and the feeling that the staff had about students and what we were there for (Interview, W.B. 1994).

A former teacher at Byron and now a Director of Education in a large school district responded:

Many of us have been Byron parents as well as teachers. My son graduated in 1987. There were still elements of the original philosophy. Davin was heavily involved in music and taking courses in Toronto at the time. He was literally absent for about 20 per cent of the time for his chemistry class and he was able to negotiate himself out of that class, on his own recognizance, as long as he did the work and kept up on the tests. I can't imagine a whole lot of schools where he could say "I'm going to leave my cello in the vice-principal's office and go to Toronto rather than my chemistry class". He is a pretty good negotiator, but still
in all, it takes a school with a bit of flexibility to respect that kind of situation (Interview, P. L. 1994).

A third story was told by an English and German teacher:

The thing I remember was kids accepting things of each other. We had one kid who was almost seven feet tall and played the piano. He couldn’t sit on the regular piano seat he had to bring in a special stool and he played some very obscure classical music. I cannot imagine any kid in the school sitting and listening because it was just such ‘far out’ music and yet the kids would listen to him play. They listened to understand what he liked about it. They were interested in finding out what fascinated him about that kind of stuff and they asked technical questions about the music that I didn’t understand. Now, pupils would say how can he stand that kind of stuff. I can remember at Byron kids encouraging other kids even though it was not their thing and the staff also did that (Interview, G. G. 1993).

Much of my interview with Wesley Walters dwelled on his travails as principal of the school in the turbulent early 1980s. When we began to talk about the early 1970s when as chairman he had pioneered innovative approaches to the teaching of English to pupils regardless of their ability levels his face lit up, and his old optimism resurfaced when he asserted “I still think if we had been there 20 years later we could have sustained that establishment” (Interview, W. W. 1995). He went on to elaborate how much the collective efforts of staff members in his own department and from across the school had meant to him both professionally and personally. “I guess that period really sustained me,
interested me. I learned so much from my friends, I learned how to manage people”
(Interview, W. W. 1995).

When the original staff arrived at Byron two weeks before the school opened, there was no curriculum, few resources, no procedures or policies. As Bond described the situation:

Set aside all the things that would normally go with equipping a school - the ordering etc. - set that aside, and just take into account the factors involved in writing programme to fit the philosophy of continuous progress: writing programme to fit into a semester, the one hour period, the need to change instruction that had to take place, add to all that over 7000 visitors, then you see the challenge for teachers (Interview, W.B. 1994).

Bond had articulated a broad set of operating principles, designed the comprehensive structure, recruited the staff, now the rest was up to the staff. As a member of the women's group described the situation:

We were into something together that was really powerful and created its own dynamics and we brought our own excitement to it. It was a young staff and when things got rolling a lot of stuff spun off. It was a school that operated on ideas that were significantly ahead of their time. A high level of collegiality was expected by people who were there. They simply assumed they worked in teams and partnerships. I haven’t seen that degree of interdependence and influence until very recently at a school. An off-shoot of that is that the staff felt very
strongly that they owned the school as much as the kids or the administration did. And I think that accounts to some extent for the increase in women’s interest in leadership (Byron Women’s Group, 1994).

Another teacher who left Byron in 1980 to work at another innovative school said, “It just broke my heart to leave. We really tended to give our lives to the school. I used to dislike holidays because I had to leave. I was not originally into the togetherness thing but I developed a liking for it” (Interview, B.W. 1993). A member of the women’s group described collaborating at pupil promotion meetings, “I remember those huge teams of people who would meet and we would look at every single report card. We discussed the kind of follow up we would do for each student” (Byron Women’s Group, 1994).

Collegiality just happened, almost spontaneously. It was not planned as a separate project or initiative. Although the school building facilitated collaborative action to some extent, in many ways it occurred out of necessity. The size of the task, the urgency to get the operation running, the considerable public scrutiny of other professionals, many of whom hoped the school would fail miserably, compelled the staff to collaborate, if for no other reason than to survive. As Walters had stated, “we were like most ‘paradigm pioneers’, we felt we were on the right track but couldn’t prove it empirically” (Interview, W.W. 1995). As a staff, it dedicated itself to continuous improvement, and rigorous evaluation of all aspects of the schools operations.

This commitment to improvement was one of Byron’s great strengths in relation to other schools but also a source of frustration and exhaustion. In his outline of the terms of
reference for the five year evaluation of Lord Byron described previously, the Assistant Director of Education stated:

... Lord Byron has already been the subject of more evaluation by more people than any other school in the region. The thousands of visitors who have visited the school have expressed their opinion. The annual evaluation report of the assistant superintendents and the Superintendent of Instruction and other members of the Executive Committee have been completed each year. The school has been the subject of study by faculty members at O.I.S.E. (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) and McArthur College. But perhaps the most thorough evaluations have been those conducted annually by the school itself in surveys of parents, students and staff. Certainly, these internal studies have been among the most rigorous done on the school and they have some added validity because they are based on the school's objectives (E. L. _Terms of Reference: Evaluation for the Study of Lord Byron High School_, 1974, p. 1).

The External Evaluation Committee (1975) reported on Byron's commitment to continuous evaluation for improvement:

... the large amount of documentation produced by the Byron staff over the years attests to this commitment. At the same time this commitment caused our group serious concern. In essence we wonder if Lord Byron is 'evaluating itself to death'? Evaluation consciousness is praiseworthy; too much may be counter productive (p. 19).
The wisdom of this prediction was to become evident over time. The staff members who came to Byron in the first few years had almost a Messianic sense that they were venturing into unknown territory and that a progressive, optimistic, pupil-oriented direction for education in South depended on Byron's success. At the same time, as a teacher who was there in the early 1970s declared "We were always on display, trying to do things in a way that hadn't been done before" (Interview K. Mc. 1993). Others, like Walters, confessed to ambiguity about this boldness:

I had no where to look to sustain the innovations especially process writing. Sometimes I would wake up at two o'clock in the morning and say I have created a monster and didn't know how to sustain it (Interview, W. W. 1995).

A combination of the meaning of their work and the fear of failure derived from the uniqueness of their efforts, as well as Byron's high profile, contributed to 'hothouse' tendencies (D. Hargreaves, 1995). The continual internal scrutiny at its best led to improvements, but pushed too far led to fatigue and a 'siege mentality'. As Bond was to reflect years later, in addition to the workload what really hurt was "the sniping at what we were doing, and sniping in the sense that the critics would not accept the invitation to come and see what was going on. They simply wanted to find fault and pick at what we were doing from a base of no knowledge, so that created stress" (Interview, W. B. 1994). It also created a pressure to demonstrate by the best empirical, rational methods available, what George Bernard Shaw called 'brute sanity', that Byron was indeed a better way. The effort, for the most part was futile, because the critique was largely emotional and non-rational. Byron people did not understand that at the time, but the effort helped to shape a culture of continuous, almost frenetic, search for improvement and justification.
In the 1975 evaluation report, the internal committee reported on five years of professional development:

Each year a theme has been determined, and all programs dealt with the particular theme. It is worthy of note that professional development programs have almost totally replaced 'staff meetings'. The program for the first two years dealt with the building of curriculum. The Don Stewart (an American curriculum expert) Seminar of June 1972 and the follow up evaluation (again with Don Stewart) in 1973 were the culmination of that year's activities. In the ensuing years, topics have included:

1. Teacher effectiveness training,
2. Reality Therapy,
3. The School and Society,
4. The Community School,
5. Stress and how to handle it.

After four years of involvement of experts from outside the school, there is developing an increased utilization of the expertise within our own staff (e.g. workshop by W. W. on the Therapeutic Community), and teachers are now travelling to other centres in search of stimulation and innovative practices. In conclusion, professional development has always been an important aspect of the Byron program (p. 70).
This focus on professional development was unique in the region, if for no other reason than D.S.F. (Differentiated Staffing Fund) enabled Byron to finance it. The choice of topics reflects the changing nature of issues confronted by Byron, and the culture of intellectual inquiry which developed in the early years. As Walters (1995) reflected “The one thing about Byron above all other schools was simply intellectual acuity. People were thinking at a level I haven’t met in other schools” (Interview, W. W. 1995).

Byron’s approach to professional development was unique in the system at the time (Interview, D. K. 1996). While most teachers in other schools were usually involved in subject based professional development, the teachers at Byron attended to school-wide issues. Most learning opportunities in the region might better be described as in-service in that teachers were treated like quasi-professionals who must be exposed to the ‘right’ way to do things. The Byron approach tended to be more professional because it came from the needs identified by the staff not the principal or central office. From the beginning, the professional development committee was a major school committee. This group which was broadly representative of the staff as a whole was provided with funds to develop a professional program which teachers identified as useful and necessary. Each June staff was surveyed to determine issues for the program in the next school year.

Each new year at Byron meant “constant change, constant experimentation” (Interview, G. G. 1993). It also implied learning from mistakes. Bond created an ethos in which teachers learned from mistakes “because mistakes were open and acknowledged” (Interview, J. C. 1993). “At Byron we decided if we made mistakes we were allowed to learn from those mistakes” (Interview, B. W. 1993). One teacher provided an example from the early 1970s:
I remember doing an English course in grade 11 where I did it on a contract basis. I made up dozens of units and put a point value on them for the amount of work involved in research. I noticed that I hadn’t taken into consideration the fact that by the end of the course they didn’t know each other and the whole social element was missed so I decided that was not a good system. Social interaction is important and they weren’t getting it because they would go off in their own little niche and do their thing and I was not happy with that. Things like that would come up and you could see that educationally they were sound but there was an element missing (Interview, G. G. 1993).

Experimentation implies making mistakes. In a highly visible and antagonistic environment mistakes become magnified, publicised and criticised (Fletcher et al, 1985; Hargreaves et al 1992). When this happens the experimenters pull back to the ‘tried and true’, and learning ceases. Experimentation leads to higher levels of learning only if it is sustained by the environment and supported by the administration. Bond created this ethos.

This same teacher described Bond’s style:

I appreciated him more after the fact than at the time but in retrospect when I look back probably one of the things that made him a good leader was that he could talk about what you had done and say - he would remember and come back a couple of weeks later and say “how did such and such work out” and I would say, it was either “great” or it “bombed”. If it bombed, he would say “did all of it
bomb or did only part of it bomb? Do you have to change it all”? It became a questioning routine so that it got you thinking again as to the evaluation of it and then you would start over again and make the changes you needed (Interview, G.G. 1993).

Bond had made the need to support staff experimentation very clear in 1970 when he stated, “The most significant contribution to the success of our experimental position at Lord Byron will be made by the staff. It is obvious but worth stating, that all other aspects will fail if staff does” (Lord Byron Aims and Objectives, 1970-71, p.1).

Byron provided the support of the chairmen, secretarial resources, instructional assistants, guidance personnel, and remedial teachers to assist in the classrooms. These resources were purchased though the differentiated staffing funds. Perhaps more important was the informal support teachers received from colleagues. A member of the women’s group remembered the support from her department:

You couldn’t come into our work room and say I’ve got a problem without everybody leaping up and saying, “well Jane here is how you can do it”, or “here is an idea, try that, or have you read such and such” (Interview, L. D. 1994).

Another member of the women’s group recalled how the openness of the building and team-teaching facilitated mutual support and learning:

I learned how to write research essays from Blair Alden. Since Blair had a large class, I went into his class in my student services role to work with the students
and help them. I learned how to do a research essay in this grade nine class. I never learned that in school (Interview, J. B. 1994).

The originating staff at Byron had many things in common - youth, idealism, and a work ethic. At the same time there was great diversity. One third of the staff was female which was a somewhat higher percentage than other schools at the time. There were four visible minority staff members in a system which at the time was white and middle class. A few staff members came with reputations as non conformists in previous settings. This diversity was honoured and encouraged. As a female teacher who was in her second year of teaching when she was transferred to Byron recollected:

There was a real feeling that every staff member was important and his or her point of view was taken into consideration. It was assumed they could take care of things in their classroom and could take on a new idea and follow it (Interview, C. S. 1993).

Another commented:

You could ‘dare to be what you are’. There was that element that you could be what you were, you did not have to leave yourself at the door, so you were what you were. It was not just walking in and knowing who you are, it was learning. Part of the whole discovery of yourself was what was professional and what was personal (Byron Women’s Group, 1994).
At the same time, this diversity created some competition within the framework of a co-operative enterprise. An experienced teacher, who came to Byron to restart his career, stated that “all staff were friends but there existed an intense competition among staff which stimulated more change” (Interview, R. M., 1993). Still another teacher asserted that:

we were listened to and had input into decisions and had to work in a co-operative way, but also (when conflict did occur) worked at conflict resolution. It seemed that people didn’t just come out of those things just territorially, but there was a school view of things (Interview, J. B. 1994).

Another teacher who had come from another South school commented that:

My previous school was very cliquey. At Byron, everything was new and with the new kinds of learning it meant that everyone was working with different people. There was a much bigger mix at Byron (Interview, G. G. 1993).

The staff room was a very positive place (Interview, M. H. 1993). Bond made few rules but he did insist that the only coffee pot was to be in the staff room. His rationale was that he wanted people to meet informally as a staff rather than congregate in department work rooms (Interview, J. C. 1993). He knew from his previous experience the problems of what has more recently been called secondary school ‘balkanization’ (Hargreaves, 1994). The staff room was the focus of lively debate, the development of ideas, celebrations and with such a young staff, even a few romances. A teacher who came to Byron from Roxborough said that:
There was less judgement and less categorising and less bad mouthing of kids in
the staff room than in any other school that I have been in and fewer divisions
among the staff. The staff often disagreed, and there were often passionate
disagreements, but there wasn’t any nastiness. I can remember a school in this
system where there was a division within the staff between the liberals and the
conservatives that left a chasm you could fall into and die. There was a lot of
nastiness. The Roxborough staff room was a chilly place (Interview, J. C. 1993)

Bond set the tone for the school by his openness to ideas and his accessibility. One
female teacher remembered being the spokesperson for women who wanted to wear pant
suits. Women in the early 1970s were expected to be dressed ‘like ladies’ and always
wear skirts. Since this was the school’s first year and the teacher did not know Bond
very well, she marshalled her arguments, and stiffened her courage to face what she was
sure would be opposition. She began by saying “Ward, I would like your permission to
allow women to wear pant suits”. Before she had a chance to present her well prepared
arguments, he said “fine, I think its a good idea”. Shortly thereafter she went to her
previous school in a pant suit to collect something. “I didn’t even think how I was
dressed” she recalled, “and the comments I got from the staff there, even though it was
quite a formal pant suit, it wasn’t cruddy blue jeans but that was something female staff
never did, we never wore pant suits” (Interview G. G. 1993). Another teacher stated
“We had a really talented and diverse staff, but it was also accepting of the differences of
others” (Interview L. D. 1994). Virtually every respondent who was on the staff at
Byron in the early years commented in one way or another on the openness of discussion,
the willingness to share ideas and materials, and the acceptance of diverse opinions. They
also commented on the joy, the humour and the celebrations that characterised the culture in these early years.

A principal at Byron in the 1980s declared “Byron is a place of rituals and ceremonies and always has been, the staff covet them” (Interview B. K. 1993). Interestingly, many of the ceremonies involved interaction with pupils. People who were interviewed mentioned the combined pupil-teacher band, teacher involvement with intramural basketball and so on, but more often than not they reflected a shared staff attitude towards the elitism they perceived existed in other schools. Early commencements were informal and unpretentious and honoured all the graduates not just the scholarship pupils. Football which involves perhaps 35 boys and consumes about 80 per cent of athletic budgets in other schools was discouraged. Everyone who showed up for a team, a choir, a drama presentation was accepted and involved. The idea of competition was down-played significantly.

At the same time, the staff would adjourn almost en masse to the local pub on Friday night to replay the previous week. Byron parties in people’s memories were always described as interesting and great fun. Sleigh rides, wine tasting parties, corn roasts, golf tournaments were part of the culture in the first few years. Bond loved a good party and rarely missed one. The relative youth of the staff meant that humour, high spirits and enthusiasm were part of the culture. “We used to congregate more. There were a lot of type A personalities” (Interview, I. M. 1993). The humour was never cynical, at least about the pupils, nor was it sexist or racist because of the strong presence of women and visible minority staff members. The importance of humour in a school culture has been well documented (Wood, 1979; Smith et al, 1987).
Summary

With some exceptions, from 1970 until the mid 1970s, Byron can be described as a collaborative culture (Hargreaves, 1994). At the same time, as has been indicated, Byron, even in its first few years, was beginning to turn inward and become 'balkanized' in its relationships with the larger system. The openness which characterised the in-school culture did not extend to the larger system. As one member of the women's group commented:

The thing that I think was apparent right from the beginning, but maybe we were not sensitive enough to notice because we were all flying so high, the resentment of our colleagues in the system. We thought we were wonderful. We had all that press. I have a sense that people were watching to see what wasn't going to work at Byron and perhaps it affected our reputation in the county (Byron Women's Group, 1994).

Other members of the group commented in the same vein, "We were very insular, too involved with what we were doing", "I don't think we thought anybody else had a whole lot to contribute". "We did not do a lot of reaching out to other people in the system and we were not all that keen in having people who were in existing schools in South come to Byron. We were interested in people coming from outside the region, new people" (Byron Women's Group, 1994).
There were also signs of balkanization within the school itself (Hargreaves, 1994). A teacher of carpentry in the technical area commented: “I had my own little corner and didn’t get involved. In tech we were somewhat separated and I didn’t see what was going on” (Interview, E. E. 1993). Architecturally both the technical and home economics areas were somewhat isolated from the main part of the school and with some exceptions, teachers in these areas tended to operate in isolation from the rest of the school.

At the same time, some departments, while interdisciplinary in design, tended to operate along more traditional subject lines. The technical and home economics areas for example, were merged under one chair, but operated as two departments from the first day. Similarly, the mathematics and science areas, under a chair whose background was mathematics, and an assistant chair whose background was science, tended to operate like two departments. The region’s curriculum department and the province’s programme department were organised along strictly subject lines which tended to work against interdepartmental activities. The concept of a school collaborative culture in 1970 was totally at odds with the accepted ‘balkanized’ cultures in other schools and their wider systems that were part of the ‘continuity’ of education in South and Ontario. The challenge for Byron was to extend or at least preserve its collaborative culture in the face of significant divisive forces, and the tremendous effort required to establish a new setting such as Byron. In spite of the best efforts of Bond to create interdisciplinary structures, there were signs that Byron, even in its early years experienced the divisiveness described by Siskin (1994) and others (Ball, 1987; Hargreaves, et al, 1992; Grossman and Stoldosky, 1993) of a departmental organisation. In summary, one might describe the
Byron culture in Andy Hargreaves (1994) terms as a collaborative culture with balkanized tendencies.

David Hargreaves (1995) alternative model of school culture offers another lens through which to analyse Byron’s culture. He describes the instrumental-social control domain of school life in terms of achievement of collective goals. He suggests that there is an optimal level - too much ‘social control’ contributes to ‘hothouse’ or ‘traditional’ cultures and too little to ‘welfarist’ or ‘survivalist’ cultures. This model of school culture described in Chapter Three, balances the instrumental-social control component of school culture with the expressive-social cohesion domain. Schools have an expressive role of maintaining “satisfying, supportive and sociable social relationships” (p. 26). Too little social cohesion results in a ‘survivalist’ or ‘traditional’ culture, whereas too much contributes to a ‘hothouse’ or ‘welfarist’ culture. At Byron, in its early years, the tension between high social control and high social cohesion tended to remain in equilibrium. While Byron had characteristics of both ‘hothouse’ and ‘welfarist’ cultures, its culture, at least in its first five years, may well be described as a balance of these two types.

Teachers’ lives and work

Another important aspect of the Byron story was its impact on the lives of its staff and conversely the influence of staff members’ career and life cycles on Byron’s development. To probe the interrelationship between teachers’ lives and their work at Lord Byron, each respondent was asked to describe the nature of their work at Byron, how their work had changed over time, and how the Byron experience impacted upon them both personally and professionally.
Other studies concerning the initiation of new schools (Sarason, 1972; Bernbaum, 1973; Moon, 1983; Hargreaves et al, 1992) make the case that such schools require a tremendous amount of work by teachers. Byron was no exception. Virtually every interview subject who was on the Byron staff in the first five years commented on the scale of the task that confronted them. As one teachers said, “You had to be a workaholic”. She described the workload this way:

It was heavy. It was incredibly heavy. If you wanted something to teach for the next day you had to make it because there was nothing available. In designing courses and redesigning courses, every day you would come out and say what worked and what didn’t work and can I progress with this tomorrow or do I have to change something for tomorrow. You were constantly writing program and it was exhausting but it was exhilarating. I found it a much heavier workload (Interview, G. G. 1993).

This theme of ‘exhaustion’ but ‘exhilaration’ pervaded teachers’ comments. “I worked like mad writing programmes for five grades. I worked harder than I have ever worked - all departments did” (Interview, W. W. 1995). Another teacher recalled that “the early years were inspiring. There was a lot of altruism. People came to work because they thought they were doing something for humanity - more than a job, it was a mission” (Interview, J. Mc. 1993). Another teacher declared, “I became a teacher at Byron. I wrote more, I created from the ground up. Our units are still floating around the county. I keep hearing bits and pieces of things we used to do” (Byron Women’s Group, 1994).
The evidence collected, suggests that the intensification thesis developed by Apple and others (Larson, 1980; Apple, 1986; Densmore, 1987) did not apply to the Byron staff in the early 1970s. The combination of hard work and satisfaction suggests that people did not feel exploited. As one teacher indicated, “At Byron you tended to walk until you dropped - at least you had a sense of satisfaction out of it. Now you have the feeling what the hell have I done, there is not the satisfaction that goes with it” (Interview, G.G. 1993). As long as teachers felt that the expenditure of time and energy enhanced pupils’ learning and provided professional rewards intensification would not be a problem. For many of the people who I interviewed, their commitment to Lord Byron went beyond just professional commitment, it tended to influence, indeed for some, consume their lives outside of school as well.

For most of the people interviewed who were at Byron during the creative, experimental years in the early 1970s, the experience was a turning point not only in their professional lives but also their personal lives. An extended conversation among members of the women’s group is illustrative:

The kinds of relationships you build in that kind of pressure cooker situation were very difficult to repeat - a pressure cooker in that you shared so many things and the hours we were putting in and so on. There was very little time outside the school. Do you remember Friday nights at the ‘Pig’ (the local pub)?

I certainly do.
We were in this together and I think you are referring to the spill-over into our individual personal lives. I just can’t separate those. All through my 13 years, I cannot separate that experience from my development in every aspect as a principal. It is inseparable. It was so important in every way.

You think of yourself as a teacher, you think of yourself as a woman, and it all just grows.

My time was absolutely a turn around for me personally. I wasn’t being facetious when I said I came there and I didn’t want to take on any visible roles. It really totally changed my approach. I never would have had the confidence to move ahead without the support of women. It was just absolutely without parallel. I also have to say the support of men, because when I think of the acceptance that I felt that I got from the men that I was working with.

You learned that women needed to have feedback about what they did, not just how they looked. When we started getting lots of positive feedback about that kind of thing and when we started talking about people growing and learning and that kind of stuff, I think that was really important. I also felt that there was an expectation that if you were at Byron you would take something from Byron and take it somewhere else. You didn’t have the right to stop where you were - that you had a responsibility to take it on - it was not optional.

Right, after a while you just became that. You took it even if you were not trying to. You took it somewhere else because it was as much a part of your thinking
and your way or relating to other professionals, men or women (Byron Women’s Group, 1994).

As the foregoing discussion suggests, women at Lord Byron found a voice, and a vision of a different role for women within education. By networking and inviting the support of influential men within Byron, many of the women of Lord Byron have been promoted within the South system and beyond.

The professional impact of Byron on its originating staff has been significant. Of the 76 Byron staff members in 1972, there were 49 men and 27 women. Only six staff members, four women and two men, left the profession prematurely. Among the staff members who continued in the profession, 65 per cent of both the women and the men have gone on to leadership roles. Part of this pattern can be attributed to the age of teachers, selection criteria, as well as the supportive culture at Byron. Approximately 30 per cent of the teachers at Byron would then be in phase one of Sikes (1985) life cycle scheme, the 21 to 28 age group, and in their first few years of teaching. Over 90 per cent of them have continued in the profession. Only four Byron teachers were over the age of forty. All the department chairs were in phase three of Sikes (1985) categorisation, the 30-40 age group which Huberman (1992) describes as an age of “activism and experimentation”.

Clearly, Bond had chosen staff members who were at their most energetic and productive career stages. The only teachers Bond did not select were those who were ‘force transferred’ to Byron. Collective agreements necessitated the transfer of the least experienced teachers. The teachers transferred to Byron, therefore, with one exception,
were in phase one of their careers. Two of these forced-transfer people are in my 1975 sample.

The relative youth of the staff and the level of commitment to the Byron concept had significant impact on teachers' personal lives. As one male teacher reflected, “We let it happen at Lord Byron, I was working long hours and barely saw my family” (Interview, D. M., 1993). This resulted in a trend which gave Byron a reputation for changed personal relationships. Whether Byron’s record in this regard was different from other schools is difficult to determine, but using the 1972 staff list, 12 people (six couples) on staff left one marriage to enter into a relationship with a colleague on the Byron staff. Perhaps the most cogent explanation was provided by a female teacher:

People who did come to the school in the beginning came with a focus, they were hired on to the mission of the school. They were all young, strong minded, very creative, very leadership oriented people. When you get a group of people in circumstances together like that with that type of personality working long hours, and they all want to see change happen things are going to happen (Interview, J. C. 1993).

Most people interviewed suggested that the early years placed stress on personal relationships. For some, the school became life itself. A relationship which had been in some jeopardy when the teacher joined Byron was on occasion further damaged by the long hours, the emotional commitment to a task, and socialisation with like-minded people. These conditions often exist in more conventional schools. Innovative schools, because of their ‘hothouse’ cultures do appear to place greater pressures on personal
relationships than other schools. To state such a conclusion with any conviction, however, would require considerably more study. My observations in this area are quite tentative. A more detailed study would necessitate more in-depth discussions with the people who changed relationships and perhaps an investigation of similar situations in other schools.

Conclusion

The analysis contained in this chapter has attempted to look at Lord Byron in an holistic and multidimensional way. In addition to tracing the development and impact of Byron’s original philosophy, it has looked at the relationship of leadership, structure, culture and teachers’ lives and work in the creation and experimentation which characterised Byron’s first five years. At the same time, by looking through a retrospective lens of 25 years, one can identify factors which originally stimulated change, but also held within them the sources of the ‘attrition of change’. The tremendous growth of the school and the exhilaration of the innovative process led to the school’s overreaching its ability to consolidate its changes. When the results of this ‘overreaching’ combined with external forces over which the school had no control, the staff became more insular and closed, and over time entropy set in. The next two chapters provide an historical account and conceptual analysis of these periods of ‘overreaching and entropy’, which began in the mid 1970s and extended well into the 1980s.
Chapter 6
Overreaching and Entropy - The History to 1985

I was assigned as a vice principal (deputy head) to Lord Byron for the school year 1974-75. My first formal responsibility was to participate in hiring a replacement as Chair of English for Wesley Walters, who had been promoted to vice principal in another South Board school. This was my first and almost my last involvement with the new principal Peter Martin. He had arranged for a large selection committee which was intended to be representative of all the Lord Byron interest groups. In addition to Martin, it included the student council president; the president of the parents’ association; the school’s superintendent; Walters the former department chair; Clark the departing vice principal and the school’s two incumbent vice principals; two teachers and another department chair. Woods (1979) has described the school he studied as divided between its surface institutional structures and the more subtle undercurrents which were often more revealing about the school. The selection process at Byron revealed a fundamental division of the kind Woods described which was to impact significantly on the school.

Martin was ostensibly following Byron’s democratic tradition of hiring staff, yet he had apparently already promised the job to a colleague from his former school. When the committee unanimously chose an internal candidate, Martin overruled the selection and indicated his intention to appoint his former colleague. After some of the committee members pressured him to reconsider, he decided to appoint co-chairs to the department. As the new vice principal, and as a former staff member at Byron, I was appalled at what I considered Martin’s hypocrisy and political manoeuvring. I met with Martin in his office. Seeing myself as the ‘keeper of the Byron flame’, I expressed my concern rather...
passionately, and pointed out the contradictions in his approach. When he refused to acknowledge any problem, I indicated my intent to ask central office to assign me elsewhere. It was at this point that Graham Clark (the former vice principal), joined the discussion and expressed the same concern. It was only then that Martin back-tracked and acceded to the committee’s decision. I was therefore able to stay at Byron for the 1974-75 school year.

In retrospect, I suspect that Martin had ‘backed himself into a corner’ and did not know how to escape. He misunderstood the strength of Byron’s commitment to democratic decision making. This dichotomy between his understanding of Byron’s ethos as an ‘outsider’, and the meaning given to it by ‘insiders’ created a credibility gap which Martin, in spite of his sincere efforts, was never able to close. He arrived at Byron at a time when significant changes were taking place in Byron’s external context.

**Ontario to the mid-1980s**

No sooner had the recommendations of Hall-Dennis made their way to policy in H.S.1 than forces within the province attempted to modify the document’s perceived openness and lack of rigour. The Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation (1976) published a report entitled *At What Cost* which claimed that

> In the mid 1970s, teachers find that the educational system of Ontario is in a state of some disorder . . . because of inadequate direction and preparation for dealing with the perplexing philosophies imposed on them, the schools find themselves limited to day-to-day coping (p. 11).
It criticised the Hall-Dennis committee because it was composed of elementary educators and lay people, and therefore “the Report’s treatment of secondary schools was inadequate” (p. 14). When H.S.1 (the Ontario secondary program document) implemented some of the Report’s recommendations, it did so at the same time as the Ministry limited school Board expenditures through mandated spending ceilings. The Federation claimed that there were not sufficient numbers of trained counsellors to help pupils adjust, that there was insufficient in-service, lack of teacher involvement in decisions, and financial constraints from the government’s imposition of spending ceilings on school boards. To a certain extent all of these issues had substance. The O.S.S.T.F. report also reflected the concerns of subject specialists who decried the lack of compulsion which enabled pupils to avoid the ‘difficult’ subjects like mathematics, science, and French. While the Federation’s report recommended maintaining the credit system, it reaffirmed the need for six compulsory subjects, advocated rigorous streaming and rigid prerequisites. In spite of the rhetoric of recognising individual differences, the Federation’s report advocated a streamlining of the school system as it had existed before HS1 and the Hall-Dennis report

Post-secondary institutions, deprived of easy-to-administer admissions criteria provided by the ‘departmental’ examinations, also joined the chorus of complaint about the state of secondary education and particularly the more liberalising trends. The introduction to the Secondary/Post-Secondary Interface Study which investigated the interface between secondary and post-secondary education stated:
In recent months there has been growing public and professional concern over secondary education and post-secondary education and the co-ordination between them. Concern has been expressed over 'mark inflation' in the secondary schools, and students' basic language and mathematics skills. There is further concern over the increasing diversity among courses offered in secondary schools, in marking standards, and in student achievement; this diversity, it is claimed, makes it difficult for post-secondary institutions to assess students for admission and placement (The Ontario Ministry of Education/Ministry of Colleges and Universities, 1977, p. 1).

Many in the public at large, in the press, and among the politicians joined in questioning practices which were quite different from their own experiences and therefore suspect (Stamp, 1982). As long as the economic times were good the challenges were muted, but that too changed rapidly.

The provincial government responded to the criticisms. It rescinded its earlier encouragement to develop curriculum suitable for local needs and to use provincial guidelines to design a variety of courses. The Ministry of Education issued a memorandum on January 19, 1977 which expressed the intention to take a firmer hand in curriculum development.

We felt that the Ministry of Education should assist to a greater degree in this endeavour, in order to avoid inconsistencies and variations in standards and content. Therefore the curriculum materials that will be produced at the provincial level will henceforth be more prescriptive and descriptive, and provide
a solid base upon which local development can build (Quoted in Davis and Ryan, 1980, p. 22).

The Ministry tightened the curriculum, increased the number and range of mandatory credits, closely defined ‘out-of-school’ credits, created an elaborate approval process for experimental courses, restricted textbooks to those approved by the Ministry, and, in general, communicated a conservative message. In the 1977-78 version of H.S.1, the Ministry stated that all pupils “shall within their program during the first two years”, include two English credits, two mathematics credits, one science credit, one Canadian history and one Canadian geography credit. Pupils still had to take an additional two senior English credits to a total of nine compulsory credits out of 27 for a diploma. More significantly for Lord Byron, which offered its programme at only one level, the Ministry mandated that compulsory courses be offered at three levels of difficulty. Ironically, considering changes that would follow in the 1990s, the Federation protested this move vociferously. The Ontario Ministry also reaffirmed that a credit was 110 scheduled hours which effectively undercut the Byron timetable and its school organisation. From 1972 when the credit system was initiated, until 1980, there were five major adjustments to the secondary programme - all designed to tighten it in the face of criticism.

These changes coincided with the world-wide recession which began in 1973 and impacted education in Ontario in the 1975-76 school year. Money became tighter as grants from the province gradually began to diminish. In the early 1970s, the provincial government paid over 55 per cent of South’s educational costs with the remainder provided by local property taxes. Each successive year the province’s proportion was reduced to the point that by the 1990s, the province paid less than 20 per cent. The
provincial share continues to diminish year by year. This retrenchment in Ontario reflected a general economic malaise in Canada which contrasted quite remarkably with the 'glory days' of the late 1960s.

At the same time as its share of education funding was diminishing, the province mandated a number of new programmes. Among these, and by far the most expensive, was the special education requirements of Bill 82. This Bill enshrined into law in the early 1980s, gave important rights to parents, created elaborate appeals procedures and forced Boards to expand their special education programmes significantly. This meant that Boards had to provide programmes for pupils with intellectual, physical and behavioural exceptionalities. The identification of such pupils required Boards to hire specialists such as psychologists, psychometricians, social workers and child care workers. Special classes were set up for gifted pupils, behaviourally disturbed children, learning disabled pupils and other special needs children. Most Boards added personnel for administrative purposes to attend to the significantly increased flow of paper required by various accountability procedures. Time for identification, reviews, and consultation with parents and other professionals added significantly to the job descriptions of teachers and principals. While the province added funds to support this initiative, the resources fell well short of meeting the challenge, and as a result school boards increased property taxes, which in turn precipitated taxpayer unrest. School administrators and trustees accused the Ministry of playing a financial 'shell game'. By mandating significant initiatives, providing seed money, and then reducing grants to other Board and therefore school budgets, the Ministry created a high degree of cynicism among local politicians towards the provincial government. As the Chair of the South Board said in his inaugural address in 1979:
If the Minister of Education continues to make sweeping pronouncements in the Legislature that puts undue and unfunded burdens on School Boards then the time has come to tell her as School Boards ‘We’re mad as hell and we’re not going to take it any more’ (Minutes of the South Board of Education, December 6, 1979).

With the French speaking province of Quebec threatening to separate from Canada, the federal government in the mid 1970s encouraged Canadians to become bilingual through financial grants to the provinces. As the province which would be most directly affected by a separate Quebec, Ontario supported the Federal initiative by urging local school Boards, like South, to extend core French and also offer French immersion courses. Once again, supported by provincial grants, many Boards introduced French as part of the curriculum beginning in grade four, and developed elaborate French Immersion programmes. The South Board began its programme in 1978 and by the early 1980s the programme involved over 20 per cent of all South pupils. Once again this meant the addition of staff, the purchase or translation of learning materials, the modification of classrooms, and significant additional expenditures. The money for French did increase, but the provincial percentage of educational costs continued to decrease annually. School Boards were caught in a ‘catch 22’. The government was pushing them into popular and arguably necessary programmes, while shifting the burden of payment onto the local property tax.

In the early 1980s the province also agreed to provide full funding for separate Roman Catholic schools. Previously Catholic parent were obliged to pay fees for their children to attend the senior grades in a Catholic school. This emotional and highly controversial
decision impacted public schools not only in terms of reduced government funds, but also in the loss of enrolment to the separate schools. This led to pressure on public boards to transfer low enrolment secondary schools to the separate board. The South Board eventually transferred one older building as the price of Ministry support for a new building in a high growth area. Many public boards did not fare as well.

By 1984, the government had virtually completed its retreat from Hall-Dennis by replacing H.S.1 with the *Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior Divisions* (O.S: I.S.). It increased the number of compulsory credits to 16 of the total of 27. It required all courses to be taught at three levels of difficulty: advanced, general and basic. Only one diploma, the secondary school graduation diploma, was to be issued because university bound students were now required to complete six Ontario Academic Credits (O.A.C.s). These credits could be part of the 27. This arrangement not only effectively eliminated grade 13 and saved money, it also forced the best pupils who often benefit from choice to take 22 of 27 compulsory courses. Ironically, the least academic had much more choice.

By the mid 1980s, a ‘Rip Van Winkle’ who had gone to sleep in the 1950s and slept through the 1960s and 1970s would see great similarities between the school structures of the 1980s and those of the 1950s.

**The South Board to the mid-1980s**

Jim Sizemore took early retirement in 1975. His last few years as Director had been challenging and had affected his health. He had been one of the ‘great men’ in Ontario’s educational history. Many directors appointed in the late 1960s were from the same mold - male, autocratic, forceful, persistent and self confident. By the mid to late 1970s,
however, this style of leadership was becoming dated. In South, the turning point was a very public and acrimonious campaign by an evangelical clergyman and his followers against sex education, contemporary literature, and the entire concept of state supported compulsory public education. The campaign initially resulted from a teacher’s invitation to two openly homosexual men to visit his secondary classroom to discuss homosexuality. While the topic was discussed with discretion and sensitivity in the classroom, the clergyman, whose children were in the school but not in the class, used the press to condemn the teacher, the school and the system for being “godless” and teaching “secular humanism”. The clergyman went on to decry “the literary sewage” in school libraries and cited such books as Go Ask Alice and Catcher In The Rye as prime examples. Sizemore misread the situation and called the entire episode a “tempest in a teapot” which inflamed the situation further. The minister wrote a book which he entitled A Tempest in a Teapot in which he argued his case against the school board and public education in general. He also started an organisation which he called ‘The South Renaissance Committee’. Shortly after the episode began, Sizemore retired. Those close to him indicated that he recognised that his style of leadership was inappropriate to deal with emerging community issues and it was time to step aside (Interview, W. B. 1993). The ‘great man era’ had come to an end in South as it did in Ontario generally.

Sizemore’s replacement was the Assistant Director, Ed Laxton, a man of recognised integrity, scholarship, and personal sensitivity. The latter quality was at once his great strength as a human being, but to some, his great weakness as a leader in difficult times. He often described himself as a ‘broker’ among competing interest groups. Management of schools tended to evolve in his image. By developing policies on who could visit classrooms, and dealing with controversial materials in the classroom, the new Director
used his 'broker' skills to defuse the situations he had inherited. The Renaissance Committee, after a few years of activity moved onto the abortion issue, and its influence in the South school district gradually withered away. The continual acrimony and constant personal attacks over the next few years however, did take their toll on the system's second director.

Subsequent elections produced single issue candidates for the school Board who were less co-operative with each other and certainly with administration. A new type of school trustee began to emerge. Board-members had traditionally seen themselves as members of a corporate body whose job was to establish policy, while the administration was hired to carry out policy. Few trustees directly involved themselves in schools, and when they did it was only for ceremonial functions. Many of the newly elected trustees were less trusting of administration and far more involved in the day to day operation of schools. Previous Boards had been content to allow schools to evolve in different ways. The school boards of the late 1970s wanted policies which could be applied across the system. The special advantages enjoyed by Lord Byron in Sizemore's time, such as differentiated funds, were affected by this trend.

The severe budget difficulties of the mid 1970s, the renewed protectionism of the teachers' federations, and the Board's swing to a more conservative stance, combined to curtail or at least circumscribe the spirit of innovation which had characterised the Sizemore era. For example, the Board and Federation agreed to a standard configuration of department heads for the entire system. This effectively ended the Byron chairmanship structure. Similarly, a policy on examinations was approved by the Board which forced Byron, contrary to its original philosophy, to base 40 per cent of a pupil's grade on a final
exam. The Board seemed more concerned with control and predictability than creativity and experimentation. Policies on teacher appraisal, pupil discipline, balancing staff strengths, and common curriculum opportunities followed quickly on each other through the late 1970s. People in the system who wanted to develop new programmes or approaches often did so without too much support from central office. Laxton’s dependence on colleagues who had been critical of Byron meant that the school no longer had the advantage of central office support for innovation and change (Interview, P. M. 1995). Laxton believed in treating all schools the same, with no special advantages for any one school. Byron therefore, should be treated no differently than any other school. He approved the decision to place Peter Martin into Lord Byron after Bond was promoted to an area superintendency within the system because Martin was the only possible choice on the system’s short list for principals. The decision was made in the same way as any other school with very little allowance made for Byron’s uniqueness. Many years later Laxton admitted that Martin’s assignment to Lord Byron was probably a mistake (Interview E. L., 1993). At the time, however, he reflected that Martin seemed the best alternative because of his youth, his openness to change, and his Federation connections.

From a system’s perspective, the late 1970s might be considered years of ‘drift’. As one respondent commented, Laxton “had difficulty discriminating between leadership and friendship” (Interview, J. G. 1996). There was more than a modicum of truth to the comment. The Director, Laxton, essentially lost control of some of his senior officials. His friends who had been appointed to these positions betrayed his trust. There were instances of senior officials who were publicly intoxicated, misused Board funds and made arbitrary decisions. Relationships between the trustees and senior administration
became increasingly conflicted. Most initiatives tended towards centralisation of
decisionmaking at central office. Ironically, while the direction was towards
centralisation, the on-going battles between the senior administration and the Board left
the schools rudderless. Innovation was benignly allowed to continue in the system as
long as it did not create a political backlash. At the time, it was indeed ‘easier to get
forgiveness than permission’.

In 1981, a new, dynamic, and politically shrewd Director, Wesley Bartlett, was
appointed. His mandate from the Board was ‘to clean up’ the system. This he did with
speed, skill, and considerable ruthlessness. In short order he found ways to demote,
terminate or push out all the senior leaders in central office. In addition, he terminated
two middle managers within months of his taking over. He arranged for an outside
business consulting firm to advise on salaries, benefits and organisation. The Board
appreciated his business-like approach. Most people in the system who had known the
system at its peak, also applauded these early efforts.

Bartlett’s political acuity enabled him to build bridges to the school board, teachers’
federations and community. The Chamber of Commerce of Middleton, an organisation
not noted for its support of the public sector, commended the Director and stated that,
“Our educational system . . . is one of the finest in Canada. The Chamber of Commerce
is indeed fortunate to enjoy a fine relationship with the Board of Education” (Quoted in
South Board Minutes October, 1984). In short order Bartlett, with the Board’s support:

- systematised and streamlined Board policies and administrative procedures,

- developed a detailed long range plan which was acted upon,
• initiated a badly needed renewal of ageing physical plants,
• improved relationships between senior administrators and the Board members,
• undertook renewal projects in curriculum, special education and instructional technologies,
• initiated an effective schools project (Stoll and Fink, 1988; 1989; 1990; 1992; 1994; 1996).

Bartlett’s administrative, political and management skills invigorated the South Board. He recognised the need for a positive public image and convinced the Board to hire a professional communications officer. The quality and quantity of South’s public relations improved immensely. The newspapers and other media were courted with considerable success.

The 1980s were years of both expansion and consolidation in South. In 1983 the Board approved a tax increase of 8.4 percent. In the next six years the tax increase averaged 9.9 percent (South Board Budget Submission, 1992). As populations shifted, schools were built in newly developed areas of South and closed in established areas. Special education services were expanded dramatically through the 1980s to enable South to meet the spirit and letter of Bill 82. Renewals in curriculum, technology and technical education infused the system with money and energy. Class sizes were lowered, salaries increased, and resources became more plentiful. Once again, the system was seen as one of Ontario’s most dynamic.

Bartlett’s first five years were years of accomplishment and dynamic change. His last two were unsatisfying for him, and for those who worked closely with him. Bartlett was
extremely ambitious and received an appointment to a senior position with the Ministry in 1988. While he espoused collaboration and team work, he tended to be rather authoritarian. Many people found the dichotomy between his public and private images disconcerting. He often talked about his senior management team, but most participants felt that it never functioned as a team. It was often said that the best discussions were in the parking lot after the formal meeting when people said what they really thought (Personal communication, D. K. 1985). Bartlett’s primary leadership technique was to introduce a topic for discussion and wait for someone to echo his view and then say ‘I’ll think we will go with that idea’. One of our colleagues called his approach ‘planned discovery’ (Personal communication, R. C. 1984). In time, very few members of his ‘team’ bothered to offer opinions. Bartlett tended to be disinterested in educational issues such as curriculum and staff development, but allowed those that wanted to pursue a particular educational initiative to do so as long as they did not create a political problem. Since he had come to South from another Board, Byron had less significance for him than for his predecessors. To him and to most of his senior officials, Byron’s innovative days were part of South’s past.

**Lord Byron: to the mid-1980s.**

In 1975, as part of the Board’s original agreement to gain the support of the local district of O.S.S.T.F. (the teachers’ union) for the Lord Byron experiment, the Board had agreed to a thorough evaluation of the school after five years of operation. The model used was one which the Ministry of Education had employed for a number of years called Cooperative Evaluation and Development of Schools and Systems (C.E.D.S.S.). It required a combined internal evaluation group, composed of a school team, of which I
was a part, and a district team, as well as an evaluation group external to the school. The design of this process required the internal and external groups to agree to the criteria, evaluate the school independently of each other, and then co-operatively come to an agreement on findings and recommendations. It is a model which is similar to one presently used for school evaluation in South Australia (Cuttance, 1994). The external committee was composed of well respected educators and researchers. It reported that "Byron is a fine school; what is equally important, it is constantly striving to be better. The Byron staff is one of which the Board and the community can be justly proud" (C.E.D.S.S. report, 1975).

While both the reports of the school Board team and the external group praised the school and made no recommendations for significant changes, they did indicate some potential issues which indeed became problems. Among these concerns were:

- inordinate pressure and staff workload,
- communications among staff and pupils as the school grows,
- responsibility and self discipline of a few pupils who gave the school a bad image,
- a rift that might grow between original and new members of staff.

They summarised their report by quoting a teacher who answered the question, what was the most distinctive feature of the school by saying "the spirit of continuous self assessment. No one is in a rut. We are constantly trying to change to meet changing conditions" (C.E.D.S.S. report, 1975). The publication and distribution of the report was probably Byron's finest hour.
The departure of Ward Bond was a major turning point in Byron’s history. He was aware of the need for succession planning because he required chairmen to train their successors in the event of their departures. By 1974, four of the original chairmen had been promoted and moved on to other schools and had been satisfactorily replaced from within the school. Succession planning for principals, however, was a system responsibility, and in this the system miscalculated. Ward was such a revered and admired figure that his successor would have to be uniquely prepared. Unfortunately this was not the case.

Overreaching

The new principal, Peter Martin was 34 years of age in 1974, when he was assigned by the system to Lord Byron High School. He had been a successful vice principal in a very large traditional school. Openly ambitious, he moved very quickly through the ranks. He was viewed as a superb organiser, a fine administrator, and in his own way, an innovator. He embraced his conception of the Byron philosophy enthusiastically.

Martin’s tenure as president of the local teachers’ federation had endowed him with considerable political skill. In fact he had been the president when the Byron philosophy and organisation had been approved by the O.S.S.T.F. Senior system leaders hoped that a former union president, as principal of Byron, would mute a Federation which had become much more adversarial, especially over the issue of differentiated staffing funds (D. S. F.). In union terms, D. S. F. cost teachers’ jobs.

The Federation’s renewed aggressiveness reflected the change in leadership at central office. Sizemore had dominated through sheer force of personality. The new Director
was a better listener and more conciliatory. Byron had been Sizemore’s project. It was not as high a priority for his successor Laxton. As Martin has stated, “I think South was a major force in the rise of Byron and a significant force in its decline”. He felt that Laxton failed to support the school in two ways: Laxton had allowed the Federation to win the D. S. F. issue and he had appointed an assistant superintendent to supervise the school who had been quite critical of its philosophy and was a weak advocate for the school (Interview, P. M. 1995). Conversely, Laxton saw Martin as brash and overly aggressive. “He was a master manipulator of paper, charm, and people, and I’m not sure anyone could body check Peter into a corner. He was a nifty, nifty skater. He could just drown you in paper all of them proving and justifying his position” (Interview E. S. L. 1994).

Laxton’s reservations were shared by many people on the Byron staff, as well as outside the school. There was a feeling among staff members that Martin used the rhetoric of Byron but he did not really believe in its philosophy. As one person said “he knew the words but he did not know the music”. Many people on staff felt that liberty had become license. Tendencies which were evident in the first four years became manifest in the ‘Martin era’ The halls were often littered. Pupils would sit in front of the school smoking. Some rather unconventional staff were hired: as one person described them, “flower children left over from the 60s” (Interview, W. W. 1995). As the size of staff increased, communications tended to be through department meetings as opposed to staff meetings. Some placed the blame at Martin’s door, others more charitably saw school size, the promotion of many of the key players, lack of regional support, and attacks by other professionals in the system as factors in Byron’s losing its way.
1974 saw the completion of a large addition to Byron to accommodate the growth in the east end of Middleton. By 1977, when Martin moved on to a superintendency in another school board, Byron was one of the largest schools in the system. In addition to record growth, Martin felt that a number of people on staff had difficulty transferring their loyalties from Bond to the ‘Byron concept’. As Martin said, for some people on staff, change got personified in the originating principal rather than becoming part of the structure and culture of the school. From his present perspective of senior leadership he said: “Change has to be built into the processes. Change identified with a person has the roots of its own destruction. There has to be loyalty to broader issues. Life cycles of many ‘light-house’ schools have been shortened because people could not shift loyalties from the individual to broader concepts” (Interview, P. M. 1995).

Martin pushed the D. S. F. concept to the point that the Byron chairmen had over $300,000 to use to support classroom teachers. The money was spent on teacher aides, secretaries, lab assistants, and outside experts. He was able to get the Board’s senior administration to agree to use the money for ‘things’ which enabled Byron to be the best resourced school in the region. The Federation objected to ‘teacher money’ being used for ‘things’. Martin’s accomplishment, in retrospect, might have been a ‘Pyrrhic victory’ because it quickened the Federation’s attack on the entire concept. There was resentment as well from less venturesome principals. They found themselves trying to save money because of the Board’s budget difficulties by restricting paper use and other such approaches, while a neighbouring school had an abundance of resources.

Perhaps Martin’s greatest contribution was his handling of a potentially critical community. The Byron concept was so alien to most parents’ experience that even in the
Bond era, community restiveness was a serious concern. Individuals in the community had always expressed concern about the perceived lack of rigour in the curriculum, pupil free time, informality of the teachers, and discipline. Martin saw his clients as the parents and not other people in the system who he considered not worth the bother because “they didn’t seem to want to listen”. This was a view he shared with his predecessor Bond. As Martin said “the criticism never went away but we did keep it to acceptable levels” (Interview, P. M. 1995). When he left in 1977, Byron was a large, well resourced, and ostensibly successful school, but the seeds of its decline were evident to people in the school. Many felt the school had been so caught up in issues like D. S. F., adult education, community outreach, and adding programmes such as an outdoor education immersion, that the essential Byron vision had become blurred. In essence, Byron suffered from ‘innovation overload’ - too many new approaches added before previous changes had been consolidated.

Entropy

Concerns that the original Byron concept had been lost resulted in the assignment of Graham Clark, the former vice principal to Bond, as principal to replace Martin. By 1977, Clark had gained experience as a principal in another large school in the system, and was well regarded by those staff members who opened Byron and were still there. It was felt that he might be able to capture something of the essential Byron approach. Clark’s arrival coincided with a number of logistical and organisational changes over which the school had no control. He inherited a school of nearly 2000 pupils and 100 teachers and 135 staff in total. The school’s enrolment declined by 150 each year of his three year tenure. This meant that each year the most junior teachers were declared
surplus to the school. Since Byron had only known growth, this was an important psychological turning point for staff. The drop in enrolment coincided with two mandated organisational changes which further undermined the initial concept of Byron.

The Ministry defined a student credit or course as 110 hours. 27 credits were required to earn a diploma. It had nonetheless allowed schools such as Byron to experiment with the credit concept. To standardise organisations across the province, however, in 1977 it required Byron and other experimental schools to conform to the 27 credit diploma. Byron adopted the standard semested timetable which was used by all but three schools in South. The school day was composed of five 70 minute periods. Most pupils took a full timetable of eight credits per year. This arrangement effectively eliminated the free period for most pupils, which had been one of Byron’s most controversial innovations. This new timetable arrangement also largely eliminated the savings in teachers which had led to differentiated staffing funds from 1970 to 1977. Since D. S. F. was a source of irritation to the Federation, the system’s leaders agreed to its elimination. As Clark explained in his rationale for reconsidering this concept:

... auxiliary personnel enhanced the program of the school and allowed teachers to be more professional and devote more time to student needs ...

As a nurse is to a doctor so a paraprofessional is to a teacher. I would hope that some way in the future auxiliary personnel will be introduced into all schools (Report to South Board, June 9, 1979).

By 1980, D. S. F. had disappeared totally in the system with the approval of senior system leaders. Enrolment in South had levelled off and some schools in the system had
in fact declined in enrolment. This decline meant surplus teachers from declining schools had to be placed in other schools. Byron had never hired its full complement of teachers and had reallocated those unspent funds. Now teachers' positions were needed and Clark was obliged to accede to senior administration's requirement to abandon one of Byron's essential innovations.

When these changes were combined with the Board's agreement to change policy 2000-8 in 1981, which was the basis of the chair structure at Byron, another key pillar of Byron's innovative edifice was removed. This meant an increase in formal leaders, a reduction of their time for departmental functions and a return to a structure more closely aligned with other schools. Byron, however, was not quite out of innovative energy; it was the only school which voted for term limits on heads' tenures. To the present, every three years, all headships are declared open and refilled at Byron.

The school had become physically untidy and Clark worked to make sure that it was cleaned up. He arranged for structural and maintenance changes to the school, he continued the outreach to the community, and he attempted to bring back some of the academic rigour which had been compromised (Manager's Letter, G. Clark, October 30, 1978). Staff members give him credit for implementing changes, which were unpalatable to most people at Byron, while maintaining the integrity of the basic Byron philosophy towards pupils. His supervisor stated:

I am particularly pleased with the degree of success you had in the implementation of the credit and time allocation change. In addition, the fact that the staff has
worked diligently to provide meaningful courses in a more standardized organization should not be overlooked (Letter to G. Clark, June 22, 1979).

During Martin and Clark’s tenures there was considerable staff mobility. By 1978 only 23 of the 135 staff members had been at Byron in its first three years. Only five of the original 10 chairmen remained. The five who had left, all for promotions in the system, were considered by Bond to be the heart of his original group. In September 1979, Clark moved on to a superintendency in the system. In a letter to his supervisor he summarised his tenure:

We are now entering a period of consolidation and reflection and are setting new directions based upon the experience that Lord Byron has had compared with a more traditional mode. I personally find the atmosphere and attitude of the staff to be stimulating and exciting and very responsive to the challenge in education for the next ten years. There is no question that we are becoming more moderate because of our experience and maturity. The directions that we are presently pursuing consider the political environment, community reaction, Ministry directions, Board policies, declining enrolment, and academic standards (Letter, G. C. June 6, 1979).

His replacement, Wesley Walters, was one of the original chairmen. Walters had been the highly creative chair of English when the school opened. He had been one of the most powerful intellectual and creative forces within the original group and was well-liked by pupils and staff. Somewhat unconventional in dress and appearance, he was seen by many in Byron’s early days to be the personification of the more ‘way out’ aspects of
Graduates still talk about his pumpkin orange sweater, and his talent for balancing a desk on his chin. He had enjoyed a successful tenure at a small school in the north of the region, and his return to Byron was generally met with approval by staff. In spite of Clark’s and others’ best efforts however, Walters found a school which had changed profoundly from the one he left in 1974 and was now little different from other South schools.

South as well as the rest of the province experienced rapidly declining enrolment. Davis and Ryan (1980) in Canada, and Ball (1984) in Britain, chronicle its debilitating effects on secondary schools, and particularly smaller secondary schools. Courses are eliminated, teachers declared surplus, extra curricular activities reduced or eliminated and staff morale plummets. South’s policy, negotiated with the Federation, required the least experienced staff members to move to other schools in a declining enrolment situation. When staff is reduced, it not only removes younger people, it also requires significant curtailment of programme offerings. Walters used the example of the aquatics programme in physical education which was very innovative in the early 1970s, but “we just couldn’t afford any more”. The Chair of Arts, for example, “just couldn’t understand why we had to cut music programmes because we did not have the numbers any more” (Interview, W. W. 1995).

Compounding the problem was an exodus of pupils to other neighbouring schools whose numbers were remaining relatively stable. Many of these pupils were high performers who left to get more specialised courses or to participate in Roxborough’s elitist programme for the gifted. The flow of optional attendance was creating great imbalance in the schools of east Middleton. This further erosion of the student base through
optional attendance made public relations and not educational issues the main school priority.

Staff members felt betrayed by the Board, by the administration, and by the school’s community. They believed they were fighting ghosts. As one teacher reported:

One thing I experienced while teaching there was wonderful 'vibes' about what was going on and I would be out in the community and would hear people saying "No - my kid is not going to Byron, he is going to Roxborough". There was such a gap between what was going on in the place and how it was perceived in the community - it was like two different worlds. I remember asking "what is it about the school you dislike", and they would say, "well nothing but my child is going to Roxborough" (Interview P. L. 1993).

To aggravate matters further, because of the decline in enrolment, the Board’s policy reduced the number of vice principals from two to one. The one who remained was more a source of difficulty for Walters than of support (Interview, W. W. 1995). Walters was a leader, an intellectual, and a visionary, but not, by his own admission, an accomplished administrator. Unfortunately he had to spend a great deal of his time redoing administrative functions, which his vice principal had failed to complete or had done incorrectly. The pressure of managing through such difficult times affected Walter’s health, robbing him of his usual ebullience and energy. He saw his role in those years as "to maintain and contain". With so much needed in the school, he felt he had little left "to fight the ghosts". When the Ministry, remembering his truly visionary English
programmes at Byron of the early 1970s, offered him a secondment to review provincial policies in the teaching of English, he leaped at the opportunity.

By 1984, I was able to convince my colleagues within the senior management team that Byron required a different type of principal. The new principal, Patrick Garner, had never taught at Byron. In fact he had sent one of his own children to Roxborough in the middle 1970s even though he lived in the Byron Community. His major challenge was to restore public confidence and rebuild a rather disillusioned staff.

**Personal history to the mid-1980s**

I was promoted to a vice principal’s position for the 1973-74 school year. My first assignment was to a middle school (grades 6, 7 and 8). Since I had elementary teaching experience, I was considered a good candidate to work as an administrator in an elementary school. One of the beliefs in South at the time was that secondary and elementary administrators should get experience in the other panel.

In 1973, while teaching at Byron, I had arranged an exchange with an elementary teacher I had met on the South Leadership Course. I taught his grade two (7 year olds) class for a semester and he taught courses at Lord Byron. My semester with seven year olds was probably the most challenging role I have ever played in education and the one for which I was least prepared. I was like a first year teacher. I worked hard on my lessons but when my initial plan did not work I had no alternative. I even had discipline problems, which as a secondary teacher had very rarely happened. To compound my problems, I taught in an open area which held 130 pupils in four classes. What I did not realise was
that the other three teachers, all female, had objected to my exchange because they did not want a male working with them. They had not been consulted about the exchange, and my presence was part of the school principal’s plan to ‘shake things up’. All three teachers taught in traditional, structured ways, and in the principal’s view, used the open area improperly by teaching a very ‘closed’ programme. Needless to say it was not a collaborative or indeed friendly culture. Fortunately, the school librarian had been a primary teacher and helped me considerably. In addition, I could call on the resources of Lord Byron. My pupils did stream studies with the help of Lord Byron pupils, reading exchanges with the secondary school, and wrote plays and presented them as television programmes at Lord Byron. This was at a time when videotaping was in its infancy.

Attempts to involve my teaching partners were resisted and in retrospect I can understand why. I suspect I learned more about programming, teaching, micro-politics, and leadership in my six month exchange than I did in most of my formal training.

My year at Confederation Middle School was an enriching and enjoyable experience. I had hoped to stay at Confederation for at least one more year but the senior administration in South had other ideas. Bond had been promoted and Clark had been assigned to another school in 1974. I was directed to Byron as the ‘continuity factor’ to support the new principal Martin. After the initial difficulty with Martin, our personal relationship improved significantly. As he said some years later, he appreciated the fact that I had taken a career risk to support deeply held principles. While my personal relationship with Martin was and is quite positive, and he was very helpful in advancing my career, I found the school strangely changed. Many of the original staff were still in the school but Bond’s ‘defection’, as some saw it, seemed to take the heart from the staff. Martin, in my view, tried very hard to relate to pupils and staff in the relaxed, non-
threatening way of his predecessor, but to some people, his efforts seemed somewhat contrived and many felt they lacked sincerity. My role tended to be that of a buffer and peace-maker between the staff and Martin.

During my year as a vice principal at Byron, the school continued to ride the crest of increasing enrolment, abundant D. S. F. resources, a relatively new and expanding building, a committed and youthful staff, and effective department leadership. Most of the staff problems which I dealt with were not issues of values but rather of trust. Martin's real problem was that he was not Bond. I found myself explaining the Principal to the staff and conversely trying to help the Principal to understand the culture. Byron's initial concept was built upon high expectations for all pupils within a humane and caring environment. Some of the 26 new people (Lord Byron Aims and Objectives, 1975-76, p. 3) hired or transferred to Byron before the 1974-75 school year understood the caring part but never understood the expectations part. Attendance in class began to be a problem because some teachers looked the other way when pupils missed classes (Interview, R.T. 1993). As the vice principal, I spent a great deal of time dealing with these issues. Rubbish began to appear in the halls because some pupils took less pride in the school and some staff members believed that expecting pupils to follow common sense procedures was a denial of freedom. The smoking area, which had been confined to the back of the school, gradually spread to the front lawn which faced a main thoroughfare. This created a terrible public image for the school, but few seemed concerned.

Individualised mastery programmes which allowed pupils to complete their courses in their own time resulted in 20 to 30 per cent of pupils in some courses failing to complete
their assignments by the end of the semester. As the vice principal, I inherited the job of ensuring accurate school records and of supporting teachers in their efforts to get pupils to complete their work. I was, it should be added, at least partially responsible for this debacle. As professional development chair in 1972, I had invited to Lord Byron an American proponent of behavioural objectives and individualised programming who had convinced many staff members that this was the way of the future. The theory sounded wonderful but the practice proved difficult to implement.

Martin had lobbied to be principal of Byron because he saw it as an opportunity to initiate change within the system and the Province. As his assistant, I became involved in the development of full semester immersion programmes. Many were planned but only one, an outdoor education programme, survived over time. It is now in its eighteenth year and has included many of the other South secondary schools and has spawned similar programmes elsewhere in the school district. Other programmes, which had been a modest part of the school, such as the 'Bearpit', a speaker series during pupils' free time, Canadian Studies, the community council, and elementary school liaison among many others, blossomed into major initiatives. In the same way as D. S. F. was expanded and modified, other programmes grew beyond original intentions. While I was a part of this expansion, I recall my uneasiness in dealing with some people who had creative ideas, but had difficulty putting their plans into action. I found myself involved in a number of 'face-saving' or 'damage control' issues which resulted from people's enthusiasm outrunning their ability to deliver. In May of 1975, I received the good news that I had been appointed principal of Islington District High School, a small school in a one-industry town in the northern part of the school district.
I continued as Byron’s vice principal until the end of June 1975 but took only a marginal role in planning for the upcoming year. My last significant task was to project the next year’s enrolment. Once again, the numbers increased dramatically, from 1603 in June 1975 to 1821 in September 1975. During the last two months in the school over 20 teachers were added to the staff. I found myself at the time questioning some of the choices because I considered some to be too unconventional for what I understood Byron to be. A number of people hired might be classified as part of the 1960s counter-culture. The first time I left Byron I did so reluctantly; the second time I did so with little emotion other than some relief that I would not have to preside over a situation which I sensed was rapidly growing uncontrollable.

At Islington, I assumed the leadership of a school which had introduced many of Byron’s structural changes. My predecessor as principal had been a part of the Innovations Committee which had established Byron and he had tried in this small town setting to replicate Byron. Islington was semested, used the Byron timetabling model, had a chairmanship structure, and a very small D. S. F. fund. While the structures were similar to Byron, the culture was quite traditional. Deep resentments existed toward the South system which had taken over the school in 1969 and demoted a long serving principal and replaced him with its own person. My predecessor acted vigorously, and as beneficiary of his actions, quite courageously, to demote long serving department heads that he believed to be incompetent, and to replace them with more energetic and creative department chairs. In the process he reduced the number of leaders and incurred some deep enmities. He also tightened procedures for staff and pupils and insisted upon improved academic standards. When I arrived, I found a school staff and community which were split between supporters of the previous principal and those who disliked him
with considerable passion. Both the superintendent responsible for the school who had
often clashed with the former principal, and the local school trustee, who was a long time
resident of the community and a friend of some of the demoted heads, were in the latter
group.

My appointment was viewed by some with considerable consternation. I represented
Lord Byron, which to many was that bizarre place in Middleton which was threatening
long held ‘truths’. My first introduction to the school occurred in the superintendent’s
office when he let me know in no uncertain terms that my appointment was Sizemore’s
idea and that he disagreed with the Byron concept. He then proceeded to blame me for
every thing he found offensive about Byron, Ward Bond, and the departing Islington
principal. I had not realised until that moment how deeply people within the system
resented Byron. Similarly, the local trustee let me know that the community did not
approve of the previous principal and liked the school the way it had been.

In a relatively short time, I realised that it was best to distance myself from my Byron
past. It was clear that only five years after it had opened, people in the system, regardless
of role, held perceptions of Byron which had become ingrained, and were difficult if not
impossible to alter. Ironically, the strategies I used and that were emulated by others in
the school were practices I had honed at Byron. By 1978 when I left the school,
Islington had an outdoor education immersion programme, interdisciplinary courses,
leisure-time athletics, multi-text English programmes, as well as a school owned and
operated cafeteria and a supportive community. My successor Wesley Walters, also a
Byron original, was in time able to move into the school without the ‘ghosts’ of Byron
following him.
At the same time as these initiative were being introduced, modifications of many of the Byron inspired structures at Islington were being changed to conform to the same Ministry or Board pressures experienced by Lord Byron. My challenge was considerably less than that of Graham Clark, who had become Byron’s principal in 1977, because these structures had been imposed on Islington and there was not the same staff commitment as there was at Byron. By 1978 when I left Islington, it operated on a 27 credit diploma, 70 minute periods, 110 hour credits and had lost its D. S. F. While the structures had become less like the original Byron, the culture became more like Byron had been in the early 1970s.

After three years at Islington, I was appointed a superintendent. In this role I was responsible for the supervision of 12 elementary schools and two secondary schools. The role was attractive because of its Kindergarten to grade 13 responsibilities and also it meant that I was closer to my home. Ironically, I replaced Ward Bond who had become so disenchanted with the political machinations of his colleagues in senior administration that he moved to a neighbouring Board. His legacy remains in South, however, in the many leaders that were inspired by his vision and style. I found it very easy to continue his patterns because they were procedures we had worked on together at Byron.

In 1974, Bond and I and a few like minded people in the South system had established an ad hoc committee on teacher supervision. This committee was born out of disenchantment with a Board supervision system which was more intended more to exact teacher compliance than to promote growth. Our experience at Byron, as well as our knowledge of the literature, convinced us that there were better ways. While not an
official Board committee, we proceeded with the tacit support of senior leadership and particularly Sizemore. Our research led to the creation of the Teacher Evaluation Task Force in 1975. As the secondary principal's representative, I helped to shape a policy entitled Co-operative Supervision and Evaluation (C. S.&E.) (Board policy, 1976). As a superintendent I had major responsibilities for its implementation and my involvement continued through its subsequent revisions in 1985 and 1993 (Stoll and Fink, 1996).

Similarly, the system's management system, called Education By Agreement (E. B. A.) was developed from Byron's invitation to the noted management expert Steven Covey to conduct a workshop for Byron leaders in 1973. Inspired by Covey (1989), the system established E.B.A. as the process to develop personal growth plans, long before such processes were popular in education. Both the C. S. and E. and E. B. A. policies emerged from Byron, and were initiated at a systems level by Bond.

For seven years from 1975 until 1983, I was an observer and played little direct role in Byron's affairs. Then I was transferred to Middleton in 1983 and assumed responsibility for the supervision of Byron. The Byron I had known had changed dramatically. It was losing pupils not only through normal attrition, but also to Roxborough. Roxborough was seen by the community as the 'academic' school, Byron as the 1960's school, or more charitably, the 'special education school' because of its willingness to be open to all pupils. Real estate agents perpetuated the stereotypes by recommending that parents use the Board's optional attendance policy to send their pupils to Roxborough. Teachers at Roxborough demeaned Byron in private - and sometimes in public. One Byron teacher whose husband taught at Roxborough reported that it "got to the point you would go to a party and wouldn't tell anyone you were from Byron. To go to a Roxborough party..."
was not always fun. It became evident that the school had to become more accepting of the community’s ideas. It was very simple, the kids were going to Roxborough, they were not coming to Byron” (Interview, C. S. 1993).

Another teacher at Byron described how he and his wife decided to buy a house in the Roxborough area long before he went to Byron:

My wife went to East High School in Middleton. She said we are never buying a house in the east of Maple Lane because that is the Byron area and Byron is an Arts school. Because she went to East and it was a stereotype that is the way Byron originally started - if you can’t succeed anywhere else ship them over to Byron (Interview, J. S. 1992).

I very quickly learned of the community’s disaffection with the school. During a process to consolidate a number of primary schools, the committee I chaired suggested creating a grades 7 to 13 (11 to 18 year olds) school at Lord Byron. The reaction to this proposal was overwhelmingly negative. While the furor over a ‘7 to 13’ school enabled the committee to solve the primary school problems with no opposition, it showed the depths to which Byron had fallen in the eyes off the community.

My first action was to enforce the letter of the Board’s optional attendance policy which required pupils to attend the school in their neighbourhood for their first year in secondary school. With the help of a principal new to Roxborough, and Wesley Walters, we were able to slow the flow of pupils. Needless to say this required considerable time and energy to implement. Other problems such as discipline, program offerings, and
perceived disorder remained. Unfortunately, Walter's health and energy level prevented
his taking decisive remedial action. It was my impression at the time that he was
overwhelmed by the complexity of the problems he faced. My perception was
corroborated many years later when I interviewed him. My personal conundrum was that
Walters was a close friend who at that point in his career was not capable of doing the
job, and he knew it. Fortunately for both of us the Ministry secondment came along at
the end of the year.

My most significant intervention in attempting to change Byron from a 'struggling'
school to a 'moving' school (Stoll and Fink, 1996) was to arrange for the transfers of
Patrick Garner and Betty Kelly to Byron. Garner had lived in the community throughout
Byron's evolution and understood the challenges and requested the assignment. As Kelly
stated when asked why she joined the Byron staff:

I wanted to go. I wanted to go there because of the creative nature or aura that
was around Byron and because of my background and personality I would have
been best suited there ... I suited them and they suited me

(Interview B.K. 1993).

Considered by senior administration to be a very capable principal in his previous posting,
Garner was decisive, articulate and politically adept. In an age where people seem to be
very image conscious, Garner presented a very positive, professional image to the
community. Since Byron's problem was one of image, I determined that the problem had
to be attacked on that basis. To assist him, the Board assigned Kelly as his vice principal.
Kelly was a new appointee who had worked closely with Garner in his previous school.
She was young, out-going and visionary. Because their talents complemented each other, they were placed in Byron as a team to reverse a difficult situation. Both of them had proven they could work well with a community, the politicians, and staff.

I was very much a 'participant observer' of the 'creative and experimental' phase of the Byron experience. Through much of the 'overreaching and entropy' stage I was an interested observer. My only personal involvement came at the beginning and towards the end of this phase. My one year tenure as vice principal coincided with the tremendous growth in pupil population, and the beginnings of what I have described as a stage of 'overreaching', in which innovation was pushed beyond the staff's ability to consolidate the changes. I returned as the school's superintendent eight years later, at a time which many staff members considered the lowest point in Lord Byron's short history. The 'entropy' that had set in was immediately evident to me and to its new administrative team. It is to the analysis of this second phase of Byron's life cycle, that I now turn.
Overreaching and Entropy - The Analysis

When the first pupils arrived at Byron in September 1970, the school had no history, no traditions, no mythologies, no reputation, and no culture - in effect, no ‘identity’. By the time Peter Martin became principal in 1974, he inherited a short but very rich school history, some traditions, and not a few myths and legends. He was appointed to a school, which in the educational community, was either revered or reviled. Few remained indifferent. It had an ‘identity’ based on its perceived progressive philosophy, its open building, and the public images of its key leaders. As a later principal who lived in the community throughout Byron’s history stated:

I think Byron really shaped its own best times. I think the people that were there, the people that were hired, the leadership, it basically decided what kind of school it was going to be and where it was going (Interview, P. G. 1993).

There were rumblings of discord in the community but they had not surfaced in a coherent form. The parents who participated in the Parents’ Council were enthusiastically supportive (Lord Byron Evaluation Report, 1971-72). Within the school, a dynamic, energetic and closely collaborative school culture had developed. By the early 1980s, however, the school had closed in upon itself, lost its initial energy, and reverted to structures and cultures which were similar to those in most of the other schools in the South Board. Wesley Walters explained what he saw from his perspective as a chairman from 1970 to 1974, and Byron’s principal from 1980 to 1984:
The people who were capable of doing anything went on elsewhere and the people who depended symbiotically on the change agents and dropped back in the pack and it was imposed on them from administration from above and not just from administration but from the community. Those first four years, we really resisted community attempts to impose conventional patterns on us and we were able to do it by force of personality, force of argument and by the demonstration of competence in the classroom (Interview, W. W. 1995).

When interviewed later, he said with a huge sigh, "When I went back in '80, it was just like any other high school". Some very small but consequential things had changed - the formal commencement, principals’ pictures on the walls, pep rallies for sports teams had been introduced. "I think of the physical education programme based on non-competitive lifetime activities in the 70s and the goddamn hockey team of the '80s. It was the toughest hockey team in the South Board. A year after I left, the principals of Roxborough and Byron had to cancel the hockey playoffs because of violence". That, he said "was completely antithetical to the mood of the early years" (Interview, W. W. 1995).

This chapter employs the conceptual structure developed in Chapter Three to examine these changes in some detail, and in particular, the various factors which resulted in Byron’s overreaching in its growth years and its loss of energy and perceived reversion to the continuity of schooling in the South Board in its years of enrolment decline.

Context
Staff learning, as discussed previously, was an integral part of Byron’s culture in the first few years, but as time went by, that learning became isolated from the rest of the region. As Fullan (1993) states “The learning organization must be dynamic inside but perforce must be highly plugged into its context” (p.83). Sarason (in press) develops this idea further when he argues:

If you enter the arena of educational reform with a ‘find the villain’ stance you contribute to what is already a conceptual cloud chamber. There are no villains in the sense that this or that group in or related to the system deliberately made a bad situation worse . . . No major educational problem is only a ‘within system’ problem . . . That means that any action that stays within the system - based only on its own resources, personnel, decision-making processes and planning - is misconceived, parochial, and likely to fail (pp. 33 and 35-6).

Changing circumstances in Byron’s environment impacted significantly on the evolution of Lord Byron. The most significant external shift occurred at the Board’s central office.

**The end of the Sizemore era**

In 1975, the retirement of Jim Sizemore had greater repercussions for Lord Byron than perhaps any other secondary school in South. It was not that the new director Ed Laxton was unsupportive of Byron, or uninterested in it. It was that he perceived he had to be equally supportive of all South’s schools. He saw himself as a ‘broker’ among competing interests rather than as an initiator and innovator (Interviews J.G.; D.K.). Moreover, he
was left a legacy of significant political difficulties which occupied his time and attention. Sizemore’s style had created some adversarial relationships. In addition, Laxton had become Director at a time when the political climate had changed both in South and in the province. The educational pendulum, which in Ontario had never swung very far to the right or the left, was perceived by the governing party to have moved too far to the left in terms of pupil choices and teacher and school decision-making; consequently steps were taken to redress the historical policy balance. Laxton summed up the situation:

I think the perception initially was that Lord Byron was a manifestation of the Hall-Dennis Report and maybe there is a bit of an argument to be made for that. There was, I don’t know exactly the year, when a backlash to the Hall-Dennis Report started to build. I don’t know that it is possible to pin it down but the climate of opinion in the province shifted away from Hall-Dennis, away from individualization and was moving back towards something called standards or the basics. There was a shift happening there in the climate of public opinion. I don’t think the Renaissance Committee helped the values much although I don’t ever remember an attack on Lord Byron by Renaissance, but certainly I don’t think Renaissance folks would be happy with it. This created a climate with the whole book censorship thing (Interview, E. L. 1994).

Laxton had his hands full with the Renaissance Committee, activist trustees, and some senior officials who betrayed his trust. Byron was not very high on his, and therefore central office’s list of priorities. Perhaps more significantly in the long run, other schools were adopting Byron’s innovations. Semestering had became very popular because it had advantages to pupils. More to the point however, if employed within the regular 27
credit diploma requirement, semestering reduced teachers’ workloads. Even the Federation, which was sceptical of most things which had the Byron stamp on them, approved because teachers liked semestering.

Less to the Federation’s liking was Sizemore’s final policy initiative. With some minor differences, he gained Board approval for the imposition of the Byron chairmanship model on the rest of the system’s secondary schools. It meant that all department heads were removed and new jobs posted and opened to all qualified candidates. The local Federation opposed the move and ultimately the provincial O.S.S.T.F. ‘pink-listed’ South. This meant that all O.S.S.T.F. members in and outside of South were forbidden to apply for any of the new jobs. Laxton had to resolve the impasse. The result was a compromise which reduced the number of heads in all schools in South, increased responsibility allowances, and gave each head more time for leadership activities. More importantly for the more adventurous principals, it gave them an opportunity to bring in some more energetic people.

In the milieu created by the progressivism of the Hall-Dennis report in the early 1970s, schools throughout Ontario and particularly in South had begun to adopt different organisational structures. In addition to semestering, many schools, particularly in South, began to experiment with some of Byron’s structures. A new school opened in Middleton in 1975, for example, which, in building design, programme organisation and philosophy resembled Byron. In fact, eight of Byron’s ‘phase two’ or ‘thirty transition’ teachers to use Sikes’ (1985) term, transferred to the new school. Five of the eight went to the new school as department heads. In the meantime, two former vice principals of
Byron had become principals in other schools and were gradually moving them towards their concept of the Byron image. Even Roxborough adopted longer teaching periods.

However, those at Byron who had enjoyed the ‘golden years’ felt abandoned. As one of the women’s group recalled:

One thing I was not aware of was political things at that point. I was just heavy with the things that were going on. I wondered where the trustees were in all of this. I remember meeting Ellen Remm (trustee from the Byron area) much later on, when we started to decline. We had gotten very big and then we started to get very small, and I remember her coming to a staff meeting and we talked about the upset and the personal element in decline and getting a very strong sense that she didn’t support us and we strongly felt at that point we had no support out there either at the senior administration level or trustee level and that got out into the community. When I left I decided you can never fight that reputation or perception (Byron Women’s Group, 1994).

Another teacher described similar feelings: “I felt like nobody outside the school at the Board level trusted what was going on in the school or supported it” (Interview, C. S. 1993). This feeling of betrayal pervaded people’s recollections of the late 1970s and early 1980s. These feelings were exacerbated by demographic changes beyond the school’s or even the Board’s control. The highs and lows of pupil enrolment contributed significantly to the ‘attrition of change’ at Lord Byron.

The enrolment roller-coaster
Byron began with fewer than 900 pupils. By 1975 it had doubled to 1821 pupils and reached its zenith in the 1976-77 school year with 2006 pupils. As Capra (1983) suggests:

> Whatever the original purpose of the institution, its growth beyond a certain size invariably distorts that purpose by making the self preservation and further expansion of the institution its overriding aim. At the same time the people belonging to the institution and those who have to deal with it feel increasingly alienated and depersonalized . . . (p.232).

Ten to twenty teachers were added each year. The careful selection which characterised the recruiting of the initial staff was lost by the sheer urgency of adding staff. More teachers were ‘force transferred’ from other schools which were declining in enrolment. Martin who was principal in the years of rapid growth stated:

> I’m not sure people really appreciated the impact of size on Byron, not so much in terms of philosophy but in terms of the ways you had to do things in a school of 2000 as opposed to a school of 900. You tend to have to systematize procedures which tends to depersonalize things (Interview, P. M. 1995).

Departments became large. Meaningful staff meetings were out of the question. Communications within the school became an issue of major concern. In the words of an experienced teacher:
The large hirings at the time meant that people didn’t really know what the philosophy of the school was. People hadn’t bought in to the philosophy. Do something for the sake of doing it without looking at all the consequences of it. I think that is where we are still fighting the image of Byron (Interview, G. L. 1995).

A review of school documents in those years reveals this dilemma. In 1975-76 one of four school goals was “strengthened communications linkages”; in 1976-77 the first school goal was “improved communications among students, staff and the community outside the school”; by 1977-78 the staff was looking for ways “to further the involvement of staff in school decision-making”. Each year a host of new procedures or school policies were initiated to ensure liaison among staff and to maintain connections with pupils and their parents. Where flexibility and common sense once reigned, rules and regulations crept in. Perhaps the most challenging aspect of size was the anonymity it created for many pupils and some teachers (Interview, P. M. 1995). With anonymity came concerns over pupil discipline, attendance, smoking, work completion, and vandalism. Plans to tighten requirements for pupils to change courses, finish incomplete courses, and attend to the basics, speak to the emerging problems created by size. At the same time increased enrolment meant more teachers and more D. S. F. which enabled Byron to “throw money at problems” (Interview, N. W. 1995), much to the chagrin of other schools and their principals. For example, size meant more pupils skipped classes, therefore an attendance secretary was hired to keep track of pupils, and inform their parents. Cohesive staff action to attend to issues became an increasing problem. Specialisation replaced co-operation as the way to solve school-wide problems (Grant, 1988).
After the 1977 school year, enrolment began to decline, slowly at first and then dramatically. By 1980 when Walters became principal there were 1661 pupils. When he left in 1984, Byron had bottomed at 970 pupils. Walters lamented the circumstances he faced between 1980 and 1984:

It was a big school of around 1700 in 1980 and went down to somewhere in the 900s (by 1984). When you go from approximately 120 staff to somewhere around 60 in four years it is very difficult to maintain any thrust, to maintain any ideology, to maintain any enthusiasm. I dealt with a lot of unhappiness because people didn’t want to leave the school (Interview W. W. 1995).

The system’s negotiated surplus procedures, which generally meant the least experienced and younger staff members were transferred, significantly altered the staff composition. Not only were the staff members who remained from the early 1970s getting older, any opportunity to create age, and gender balance was out of the principal’s hands and depended upon centralised procedures which were carefully scrutinised by the regional teachers’ Federation. Reduced enrolment meant the contraction of programmes, and the further loss of pupils to Roxborough which did not experience the same kind of enrolment decline until the late 1980s. It was my responsibility as superintendent for both Byron and Roxborough to approve all requests for optional attendance. These applications to move to Roxborough from Byron tended to be from the parents of higher performing pupils who wanted to transfer to Roxborough to take advantage of Roxborough’s French Immersion programme and its self contained programme for gifted pupils. Pupil balance was altered by demographic and programme factors. The impact
on Byron’s staff morale was significant. A veteran teacher who has spent his entire 24
career at Byron described the discouraging impact of the enrolment decline in the
early 1980s:

Morale was really an issue at that point because when you were having to say
goodbye to large numbers of people each year, and questions existed as to the
future of the school. You may have the security of seniority but the problem was
what was the future of school? Just before Patrick and Betty came there were
rumours that this school was going to be closed. It was really hard; it was hard to
say goodbye to those people. It was through Betty and Patrick that these other
units came in and brought up that positive feeling that as long as we can keep
these units in the school we would be safe. We were seeing a lot of good people
leave the school, and that became difficult in terms of organizing courses . . .
Since then, it really has been in and out for many staff (Interview, G. L. 1995).

The community conundrum

The most perplexing contextual problem which Byron faced was its reputation in the
community. As one teacher recalled:

We spent all of our energy in the last two or three years I was there, ’78, ’80, ’81,
working on public relations. That was our main focus. How were we going to
change the perception of the community? What did we do? I really don’t know
(Interview, C. S. 1993).
People referred to fighting ghosts or phantoms. Evaluations of the school by the staff and various principals list a myriad of notable activities such as a community council, special evenings, newsletters to mention a few, but the perception of Byron as a school for 'special pupils' or the 'artsy' school or the 'permissive' school or the 'Hall-Dennis' school never went away. As one teacher said, the reputation "frustrated the hell out of us, because it wasn't true" (Interview, B. A. 1993). As a secretary whose own children went to the school said, 'I don't know why the community perceives, Byron, you know, Oh! Byron, you are going to Byron type of thing, and yet academically we rate higher than many of the schools" (Interview, H. C. 1993). Regardless of the cause, the image issue caused the staff to become very defensive and insular, and expend incredible emotional and physical energy with little result.

One of the most respected people at Byron, who was often mentioned by others as one of Byron's more 'heroic' teachers, was very blunt about Byron's image. Blair Alden who joined the staff in 1975 and left in 1987 said:

The school in my time, never explained well and did some 'dumb' things. For all the good things people do in the school, the community would remember the one 'dumb' thing. Teachers were allowed to do 'dumb things', like the teacher who told the class we are going to experience silence which they did for most of the period. From my own personal point of view, I gave up. If our own professionals won't send their kids to the school we will never convince the community. In the beginning Byron did shape its own destiny but over time it was shaped by outside forces one of which was 'reality' (Interview, B. A. 1993).
Another teacher described by colleagues as ‘thoughtful’ stated that:

too many things were going on, without enough evaluation. Some people were
doing things that were non-traditional even to the Byron philosophy. They
carried them from the ‘70s to the utmost extreme. If I were a parent I would have
felt the same way as a lot of other parents felt (Interview, G. L. 1995).

A teacher who came to Byron in the late 1970s stated:

When I got there it had changed . . . the community had disowned the philosophy
because of some of the hiring - they took it too far - you don’t have to go to
class, there were no consequences - some courses were experiential and out of
the mind-set of most people, like chanting mantras - 50 or 60 kids not showing up
on a given day (Interview, R. T. 1993).

This theme of individuals pushing the boundaries to the point of public reaction reoccurs
in many interviews. Miles and Huberman (1984) describe a set of schools in their study
that tried too much in too short of time and experienced problems resulting from policies
which were a “poor fit with organizational norms and procedures” (p.147). They call this
phenomena ‘overreaching’. This would seem to be an appropriate description of Byron
during this phase of its evolution.

Other respondents who addressed the ‘image’ problem focused outside the school. “The
community was afraid to change” (Interview, I. M. 1993). “Social and cultural changes
in the 1980s worked against Byron” (Interview, D. M. 1993). “All outside forces tried
to make Byron like every other school - entropy” (Interview R. S. 1993). One former principal theorised that part of the problem was that many community people worked in Toronto and did not have time to understand Byron. He also suggested that the preponderance of first generation immigrants from the British Isles, who wanted Ontario schools to be like the schools they had experienced, influenced the conservative public that he faced. He felt nostalgia played a part. The evidence, however, suggests two overriding factors. In the words of Blair Alden:

I can’t believe you can be too different. If you are too far ahead or behind you have to judge how fast or slowly to move - to challenge without alienating. You have to explain yourself and that is hard to do. The hardest thing is to explain yourself in language they can understand. I would not use words like ‘new’ and ‘change’

Byron pushed too far too fast. Initial structures and processes had not been consolidated before new initiatives were undertaken. A community which understood that ‘real schools’ looked like Roxborough had to be nurtured very carefully. Byron’s problems were not unique as the examples described in Chapter One reveal. The message for innovative schools such as Byron would seem to be ‘make haste slowly’ and without a great deal of fanfare.

A second factor, perhaps less amenable to influence, was that Byron was a product of the 1960s and increasingly out of harmony with the values and aspirations of both pupils and parents and the larger community in the late 1970s and early 1980s. As one of the women’s group reflected:
I remember thinking in the late '70s that it was a peculiar situation where the adults stood much further to the left than the students. Because we all emerged from the '60s and our children were suddenly children from the late '70s and the societal pendulum has somehow swung, and it was a very unusual combination. I can remember teachers who were very much more focused on the '60s when parents and the students themselves were starting to be focused on being regimented, on having programmes that were less explorative, somehow we were seeing that. That began to happen and suddenly the things that we stood for were the best things that emerged from the '60s. You know teacher as resource person, all those things were much less popular somehow. The clientele had changed, I thought at the time it was a funny mix. It wasn't the pupils who were testing the limits of liberalism, it seemed the other way around (Interview, P. L. 1994).

Like most of the innovative schools identified in Chapter One, Byron tended to operate on an intellectual paradigm of change, and its community on another paradigm that was based on continuity. This collision resulted in miscommunication and misrepresentation. Many parents in the community had their pupils 'vote with their feet' by opting for Roxborough, while in the school staff members like Blair Alden responded by 'giving up', others departed for other schools, while many who stayed became more entrenched in the correctness of their version of the Byron philosophy, and refused to adjust to changing times and circumstances. Betty Kelly who became Byron's vice principal in 1984 and principal in 1987, summarised this evolution:
I think from what I have gathered having come in 1984, in Byron’s ‘golden days’ in the first years of the school’s inception that change was a matter of fact. Change was an everyday experience, it was something that people embraced. It wasn’t something that people were frightened or nervous or avoided. It added to the excitement of the day of that whole sort of culture. I think between ‘80 and ‘84 were about the lowest in Byron’s history. By then people resisted change, people were angry about change. They had done their thing; they had been the showboat. The innovators had left in the sense of leadership, formal and informal within the school, and I think what you were left with are some people who have done this over and over again, leave us alone. They went through a rather rough period (Interview, B. K. 1994).

As Lord Byron’s contextual ground shifted, so did its meaning for the school’s staff.

**Meaning**

In the first five years of the school, the staff had internalised and acted on a very definite shared sense of meaning. By 1980, the Byron staff did not experience the same certainty of direction and confidence in their activities. As Blair Alden explained:

Byron now is like a regular school . . . Byron’s philosophy was to do anything that is good for the student. I don’t think that philosophy has changed, but what people perceive is good for the student has changed. I think in the beginning, if it sounded like a good idea let’s try it, and eventually reality forces any new changes to fit into contemporary reality (Interview, B. A. 1993).
Others make similar points when they talk about Byron’s shift in meaning over time. One teacher said the breadth of course offerings which had been developed to meet the multiple needs of pupils, “has closed down” and the notion of caring and co-operation is “more talk than reality” (Interview, R. T. 1993). Another teacher who has spent the past 24 years at Byron declared:

Byron was a student centred school - student needs dictated curriculum and organization. The philosophy has changed direction drastically - it is much more academic, much more image conscious, much more driven by standards, much more compulsion (Interview, J. M. 1993).

Another teacher, who has moved from Byron stated that “it became more like an assembly line”. Another described a “shifting from a student focus to a more political focus”.

The climate of change and innovation which had been so much of the ethos of Byron in its early days had slowed appreciably. Buffeted by criticism and the enervating effects of declining enrolment, teachers took refuge in their teaching and their subjects. Its principal from 1984-87, Patrick Garner, compared the original meaning to what he found in 1984:

I’m putting it into my own words, but in the early days if you think of an idea, try it - so the whole idea of being a risk taker and being an innovator - whoever thought of an idea, if it seemed reasonable, there was encouragement to try it.
It's not as open as it was, certainly in the kind of innovation, as it used to be - that has certainly changed (Interview, P. G. 1993).

A teacher reflected that:

This school was focused on what was best for the kids, that was the question that was always asked. It is not asked in staff meetings to the same degree as it was. In discussions of change there is less discussion and more acknowledgement and announcement, but that is the way things are in the face of declining enrolment and resources. The best we can do is say how can we make this work for our kids. Not how can we survive as teachers, but how can we make it work for the kids (Interview, J. C. 1995).

A teacher who has been at Byron for 24 of its 25 years captures the shift in 'meaning':

Definitely there has been a philosophy change. The philosophy of Byron in the 1970s is not the philosophy of Byron now, I think the philosophy now is much more of a universal thing - a county thing - more of where are we going as a county. There doesn't seem to be the same focus as a school. I think the philosophy has drastically changed and I think its largely due to change of personnel (Interview, G. L. 1995).
Part of the discouragement for long serving staff members was to see structures, which they believed in and had benefited pupils, gradually eroded by forces over which they had no control. Alden’s words that “reality forces any new changes to fit into contemporary reality” was particularly true of the 1977-1984 period in Byron’s history. Bond had created structures which were holistic, integrated, and based on a very clear notion of how schools should operate. Tinkering with one structure inevitably unbalanced every other tangible and intangible structure in the school. Two major structural factors contributed to this retreat to ‘reality’, enrolment instability and macro-political decisions.

Enrolment instability

The rapid increase in enrolment and the infusion of D. S. F. money when combined with ambitious and somewhat inexperienced leadership created an overheated environment in which new initiatives were piled on top of old. The most ambitious proposal was to create a number of semester-long immersion programmes in various studies. This plan to create in-depth courses located outside the school consumed a great deal of time and energy, but only produced one lasting programme. The commitment to a ‘community school’ concept in the mid 1970s in the hope that the community would become more supportive also deflected staff from its main task within the school. This initiative reallocated financial and human resources away from the instructional program to create opportunities for adults. This effort during Peter Martin’s tenure did keep the community’s underlying discomfort with the school quiet for a few years, but at a cost to the school and its staff. Similarly, Martin’s success in gaining the approval of the South administration to use D. S. F. funds for ‘things’ antagonised an already adversarial
teachers' federation and quickened its attacks on many of Byron's structures, particularly D. S. F. As a teacher who began his career at Byron in 1972 recalled:

As a new teacher I wasn't too aware of what the Federation was doing. I remember the D. S. F. fund gave us a lab assistant. Some people would say everybody else in the region is teaching three classes, we're teaching four, and the money is going from our salaries to pay for these other aspects and reducing the number of teachers in this school. Most of us accepted what we were teaching (Interview, G. L. 1995).

Byron teachers were caught in a difficult situation between loyalty to a structure in which they believed had helped the school, and to their Federation which could argue that by teaching more classes Byron teachers were costing other teachers jobs. This argument was particularly powerful in the late 1970s because the enrolment of the South Board had declined and there was the very real potential that teachers would become surplus to the region and ultimately dismissed.

Equally damaging was the increased effort required to make systems designed for 900 pupils work for 2000. Free time for every pupil was a key part of Bond's original thinking. He recognised that some pupils would have difficulty using time wisely and put supports in place to assist these pupils. If 10 per cent of the school population fell into this category, this meant dealing with 90 pupils in 1970, which was manageable, but it also meant dealing with over 200 in 1976, which was not. The existence of a significant number of pupils, with time on their hands and no supervision, led to vandalism, litter, and generally a very poor public image. One of Wesley Walters' first acts as principal
was to tear down a tin shed in the smoking area because of drug use. Almost overnight, hundreds of ‘Fuck Wesley’ buttons appeared throughout the school. He found this a dramatic change from the pupils he left in 1974. As he said, “I inherited a lack of control, there were lots of things I was over my head with” (Interview, W. W. 1995).

Attendance and work completion were relatively easy to monitor with 900 pupils, but very difficult with over 2000 pupils on individualised timetables. Not only did the pupil enrolment more than double, so too did the staff complement. Co-ordination of on-going procedures and practices became increasingly complex. New teachers, recently hired to Byron with little sense of its essential pupil-centred meaning, tended to overlook problems and interpret pupils’ skipping class and failure to complete work as part of Byron’s philosophy. To be humane in the Byron approach was not only to care for all pupils, but to care enough to hold high expectations. Inadequate induction of new staff tended to result in an emphasis on the caring and less focus on expectations (Interview C. S. 1993). In addition, school size meant that some departments had as many teachers as some elementary schools. There were, for example, at least 15 full and part-time teachers in the English department during Byron’s peak enrolment period.

Staff members who were new to the school began to question structures which were different from other schools. As Alden recalled, they began to say “Why am I teaching my history class in an open area next to a geography class?” Since the original idea had been to timetable compatible courses together in order to promote interdisciplinary studies, the answer would be to teach social integration, “when it really didn’t”. Old answers did not suffice for new issues resulting from Byron’s changing context. “Why do we teach four, 60 minute periods when teachers in other schools teach three, 70 minute
periods”? Many practices had been just accepted as ‘part of the Byron way’ and unquestioned. As Alden recalled “people just assumed this was a good thing and in the beginning there was an attempt to make the open concept work. Time took care of all these things” (Interview, B. A. 1993).

Divisions between the ‘old guard’, who believed fervently in the original structures and beliefs, and questioning ‘newcomers’ began to surface as a result of school size. The limitations of the building became apparent with the increased enrolment. As a teacher who arrived at Byron in the early 1980s recalled:

I think the open concept has changed, the walls have been going up, the doors have been slamming shut, physically the plant is not an open concept any more. Our ventilation system is balking at the fact that there are walls where there shouldn’t be. I don’t think there is a lot of integration. I think that is something that everybody has on paper but is not actually happening (Interview, E. A. 1993).

Enrolment decline was even more destructive of the structure of the Byron programme. Fewer teachers and pupils meant the loss of many courses which at the peak in the 1970s had been very useful to many pupils. When a school loses staff, it also loses people who coach teams, run choirs and clubs and generally contribute beyond the classroom. It loses secretarial, guidance and administrative support as well. Flexibility of staffing and programme delivery were further eroded, which made the competition with Roxborough even more difficult, because programmes which would attract pupils could only be offered in the larger school and had to be eliminated in a declining school such as Byron. Departments in Byron tended to become more insular and protective. Falling enrolment
resulted in interdepartmental competition for the remaining pupils in order to preserve low enrolment courses and keep the jobs of younger teachers in a department. This pattern was consistent with Siskin’s (1994) study of the reaction of secondary school departments to restructuring initiatives. She states that her study was about:

\[\ldots\] how under conditions of stress from the external educational community even a group of teachers dedicated to a restructuring design, convinced of the need to overcome departmental fragmentation and divisiveness, committed in extraordinary ways to the needs of students, and willing to take extraordinary means to address those needs, retreat into the traditional departmental divisions which they originally defined as part of the problem (p. 11).

Loss of pupils also creates excess building space. Since system administrators abhor a vacuum, they tend to want to either fill the space with regional programmes or close the surplus areas. In Byron’s case, two regional programmes were established at Byron. Both were for special education pupils which added to Byron’s image as the ‘school for special pupils’. Few if any schools in South’s history, have experienced such highs and lows in enrolment in such a short time. Compounding Byron’s attempts to adapt to these extreme swings in enrolment was the shift back to a more traditional philosophical stance by both the provincial government and the South Board. Byron’s internal problems were further complicated by changing policy directions at the provincial and Board levels.

Macro-political decisions
Between 1975 and 1985, decisions by the Ministry of Education and the South Board totally altered the structure of Byron. The Ministry’s insistence on a 27 credit diploma not only affected the flexibility and ‘renaissance’ nature of the pupils’ programmes, but in combination with the Federation’s opposition, effectively ended D. S. F. resources, which in turn terminated the use of para-professionals in academic areas. Byron’s 32 credit diploma had required each teacher to teach slightly more pupils per year than in other South schools, which meant that fewer teachers were required at Byron. The Board had given the money for ‘teachers not hired’ to the school to use as D. S. F. Funds. The decision to end D. S. F. impacted on Byron’s use of time for department chairs to provide support to teachers. Ironically, it was the creative and progressive former department chair Walters, who as principal in the 1980s was obliged to enforce the Ministry’s guidelines for streaming pupils. At the same time, declining enrolment across the system meant that South needed placements for surplus teachers in other schools. Since Byron had differentiated some of its staff allocation, the South Board during contract negotiations agreed with the Federation’s insistence on the elimination of D. S. F. Funds.

Moreover, pressure from trustees to have uniform system-wide policies forced Byron to conduct formal exams, eliminate the chairmanship system and replace it with the system’s leadership model which increased the numbers of positions of responsibility. By the early 1980s, the forces of continuity had virtually eliminated all of the experimental structures which Ward Bond had designed in better times. It would be misleading, however, to locate responsibility for these structural changes exclusively outside the school, because leadership within the school, which had played such a vital role in Byron’s creation, also contributed to its ‘attrition of change’.
Leadership

Peter Martin replaced Ward Bond as principal in 1974. Martin observed that “people who are ruthlessly obsessed by goals sometimes pay the price”. From his present perspective as Director of Education in a small school district, he recognised that his ambition to be a principal before he was 30 years of age created some ill will. He was seen as aggressively ambitious and to some, he seemed more intent on personal advancement and profile than in attending to the best interests of the school. More serious for his leadership, however, was that Martin never engendered the trust and respect enjoyed by Bond. A discussion among the women’s group reflects the feelings of the time:

Peter came and I know personally that I spent far too much of my energy trying to fight Peter as opposed to working with him, because I felt he had a whole different style. You talk about when he was finally persuaded to hire Bev. Basically I knew then going in for an interview that the only question was what are you going to do if you disagree with me as a principal? In front of me on his desk was a book ‘Winning Through Intimidation.” That was the book. It was clear what his style was and I thought there was a lot of energy wasted. Whereas energy had been freed up to work with kids and do a lot of very productive things, we spent a lot of time trying to fight for the continuance of many of those things and not having the energy or time to continue. Because every step along the way would be blocked.
He just didn't get it. He was just the wrong principal for that school. He just did not get it! All the things he talked about - innovations, ideas, acceptance - were not just his. He did not just come up with that kind of thinking. Try to remember too about the leadership question. I also remember too when Ward left, a feeling that he shouldn’t have gone. Everything happened too quickly. Too much change, population changes and I guess you might also say too much experimentation (Byron Women’s Group, 1994).

Martin acknowledged the challenge of following Bond but asserted:

I didn’t have any trouble following Ward. I think other people had a lot of trouble with the transition - there is no question about that. One of the reasons change dies is that it gets personified with one person rather than becoming part of the culture and structure of the organization (Interview, P. M. 1995).

The legacy of the heroic leader

A number of respondents empathised with Martin’s dilemma. To some people, Bond had become almost an heroic figure. The Bond persona made things quite difficult for his successors. As Hargreaves, Earl and Ryan (1996) write:

... there is evidence that visionary leaders are not timelessly so. Their charismatic qualities do not endure across time or place. Visionary leaders tend to move on to other places, leaving their loyal dependants behind with the intractable problem of institutionalizing the charismatic qualities in other people...
Equally, the transformational impact of such leaders is often only temporary. It fades as conditions change; as limits of life, health and patience mean that the higher levels of extra effort they have been able to extract from the workforce can no longer be sustained; or (as with many ‘successful’ innovators) as they themselves move onto more interesting things (p.239).

Had the authors known Bond, they well might have been describing him and Lord Byron in the middle 1970s.

**The absence of succession planning**

Martin felt that he was a ‘transition person’. What he tried to do was move people from loyalty to a person to loyalty to a concept, because he perceived that the school had lost its initiative with Bond’s departure. At the same time he was to lead Byron through its period of greatest growth which placed him in a paradoxical situation. Strains were showing in Byron’s structures. He could pursue consolidation and retrenchment. To do so, however, he risked alienating a staff which distrusted him and mourned for its previous principal. “I think”, he said, “changes had come so quickly at Byron that I think for a lot of people, they had become very conservative in protecting what had gone on.”

At the same time, as a very young and ambitious principal, he recalled, “I was at a stage in my career in which I was not interested in the status quo” (Interview, P. M. 1995). He therefore decided that the best course for the school and for himself to establish his leadership credentials in the school and region, was to re-energise the school by pushing the change processes even further. Day’s (1996) research suggests that “Making too many changes in the first year without getting to know the school culture, staff, and
community was identified by the experienced headteachers as an error” (p. 210). From the first day he arrived in the school, Martin moved very quickly to continue the change agenda. He expanded D. S. F., poured time, energy and money into a community school concept, introduced immersion programmes, and supported innovations throughout the school. Some have suggested that many innovations were not well thought out and in the words of Blair Alden “some people did dumb, dumb things”. It would appear that Martin’s efforts to create an identity separate from Bond contributed to a backlash at the Board office and with the Federation. Laxton’s view that Martin was somewhat unreliable, a “nifty, nifty skater”, was not unique. His immediate superior in the system described him as “young and bright but there was a smartiness about his manner” (Interview, D. K. 1996). As Martin admitted himself, he made a conscious decision to concentrate on the parent community. He was “not particularly interested” in the larger educational community. They just weren’t listening too well.” (Interview, P. M. 1995).

He chose to ignore them. Unfortunately, the perceived deterioration of order, discipline, and academic rigour in the school tended to work against his best efforts to develop community support.

A number of interview respondents questioned Martin’s appropriateness for Byron in 1974. Some even suggested that the ‘attrition of change’ began with his principalship. The question remains, could anyone have replaced Bond? In the opinion of the Board’s Assistant Director at the time, there were no incumbent secondary principals or vice principals suitable, or for that matter, interested (Interview, E. L. 1994). It would appear that little thought had been given by senior administration to succession planning for the principalship of Lord Byron. An appropriate successor had not been identified when Bond was promoted. The logical successor, the vice principal, Graham Clark, was by his
own admission not ready. Martin was thrust into a situation in which the seeds of problems from decisions made in the first four years germinated during his tenure. His successors experienced the results.

Martin left the school district after three eventful years at Byron. He was succeeded by Graham Clark who led quietly, and by all accounts efficiently, very much in the way his mentor Bond would have handled things. He was the principal when government and Board policies undermined or eliminated many of the key components of Byron’s innovative structures. South Board’s evaluative documents for the period, and my interview respondents’ lack of comment on these contextual pressures, suggest that Clark was able to lead this retrenchment with a minimum of upset. Those who commented at all felt that his appointment was three years too late. Respondents saw that after Martin “as political wariness crept in, principals took fewer risks. There was less ‘future think’ because other social forces had taken over” (Interview, R. S. 1993). Successive principals inherited the policy changes of both the province and the Board and had to administer a school experiencing unprecedented demographic changes.

After three years, Clark was promoted within the system to be replaced by Wesley Walters. Within the course of six years, Byron had experienced four different principals and innumerable vice principals. It was Board policy to rotate vice principals every two years, which meant that between promotions to principalship and normal rotations, the vice principals’ role at Byron provided even less continuity than the principal.

Preserving programmes versus teachers’ jobs
Walters' difficulties have been described previously. He was overwhelmed by the 'catastrophic' decline in enrolment and the need to reduce the staff complement from 120 to 60. In addition to the trauma of reducing the staff by 15 and 20 teachers each year that he was principal, he also had to deal with a group of strong Federation people who constantly monitored his administration of the surplus procedures. While Walters worked to keep the staff which could offer a breadth and depth of programmes, the Federation worked to preserve the jobs of the most senior people based on the collective agreement. It was a 'no-win' situation for either side. Byron faced unprecedented reductions in pupils and therefore staff. These cutbacks had to be achieved within a system-wide policy which had been negotiated by the Board and the regional Federation. These procedures were designed to place teachers regionally, but took little account of the impact of enrolment decline on individual schools. Within individual schools these policies forced principals and staff to try to balance the maintenance of important programmes for pupils and the preservation of teachers' jobs. Decisions of this nature often created adversarial relationships among staff members. A procedure which was designed to cover all possible situations in the region proved particularly inappropriate for a unique school such as Byron.

Walters was consumed by these internal problem of enrolment decline and teacher attrition and tended to ignore the festering community problem. When asked about the on-going problem of lack of community confidence, he conceded it was beyond his influence. As he stated:
I'm the last person to answer that question. I never felt the community council worked effectively. Personally I never had time to talk to parents in that mode, I only had time to talk to them about their kids (Interview, W. W. 1995)

Walters' in-school difficulties compounded by health problems meant that one of Bond's innovative structures, the Chairmen's Council had to step up and take a leading role in the operation of the school. In the words of a former department head (Board policy replaced the word chair with head), "Heads were the real leaders of the school" (Interview, B. A. 1993).

The decisionmaking conundrum

"Principals came and went, but the heads were the continuity. Different principals didn't hurt because the heads and key teachers were so strong they carried the school" (Interview B. A. 1993). Blair Alden's observation on the key role of the head was corroborated by others, but many respondents still felt deeply that the lack of continuity at the principal level was damaging to the school. The problem for the school, however, was that with some exceptions, the type of head (formerly chairs) had changed. Walters commented that when he arrived in 1980:

The staff had changed, the originals had got older, 'the critical mass' of innovators had moved on, and the Chairmen's Council in my view needed direction. When you lose that critical mass and you have a bunch of people who felt abandoned and then you have people who want a commencement, a yearbook, and then you end up with a very normal high school. They (the heads) were competent, but to
my mind they were pedestrian people. They didn’t have the larger vision of where
to go and what to do. They did want detailed instructions and resented the fact
that I didn’t give them a detailed guide of what to do - I had a problem dealing
with so many things (Interview, W. W. 1995).

One of his successors described the leadership situation when she became vice principal
in 1984:

The source of leadership was not in the administrative offices, in my opinion, but
rather rested in the hands of a few heads and a sub culture of strong teachers.
Not to put down the administrators that were there, one person left to go to
another county, and the principal was having health problems and couldn’t do the
job by himself, there was too much to do. So a few very strong heads . . . seized
the opportunity and rightly so, and were given the opportunity and they literally
ran the school. The seat of power was with the Head’s Council.

She continued to describe a rather telling story

A good example of that: in June, Patrick and I were appointed to go to Byron.
We were invited to a heads’ barbecue. The department heads had gathered
together and to sort of support themselves and to maintain the control they had
been given. They gave Patrick and me, the new principal and vice principal
coming in, all of the policies they had passed in the two weeks after our
appointment - the name of the game, here are the rules, and here are the
expectations, and here are the policies, and this is how we do things. I will never
forget that, I almost fell over . . . Certainly they were protecting their turf. For all the right reasons, they worked very hard at doing that, but it was really two or three people doing it in absentia from the office. There was another sub-culture, that was within the staff and some very strong staff members . . . who were tied very closely to the Federation. They had a strong hold on staff in the sense of direction, what was acceptable, what wasn’t acceptable. Not always did the sub-culture agree with the hierarchy of the Heads’ group. There was some friction at the time, that sub culture certainly didn’t agree with the administrators so the Heads were literally caught in the middle. I think, they did the best they could and for those three years did a super job of trying to hold it together. Not that we were saviours but we did identify those issues and went forward with them (Interview, B. K. 1994).

As Patrick Garner analysed the situation he inherited:

The first major issue we had to deal with was who was going to make the decisions and whether it was going to be the department heads, the staff or principal and vice principal - who was going to have some say in, and who was going to make what decision. It probably took six months until . . . there was some agreement as to how the decisions were going to be made (Interview, P. G. 1993).

In Bond’s time he had been able to balance the leadership roles of the administration, the chairs (or heads) and the staff. The dramatic increase in enrolment, with its concomitant increase in staff meant that the principal had to rely for advice on the Chairs’ Council and
on a staff advisory committee rather than the whole staff. Over time, the rapid changes in the school required the Heads' Council (same as Chairs' Council) to assume unusual power in the school. With rapidly declining enrolment and surplus staff, however, the staff became represented by a vocal few. Rather than the administration, heads, and staff working in harmony through difficult times for the improvement of the school, they tended to conflict, in part because of regional procedures, which further contributed to the 'attrition of change'. As structures were altered or totally changed, and conflict over decision-making replaced the harmony of the early years, the culture of the school gradually changed from a collaborative culture to a balkanized, and in some respects, an individualistic one (Hargreaves, 1994).

Culture

As Garner recalled when he became Byron's principal in 1984:

I had heard before, you know, the way they collaborated to a great extent. I think by the time I got there that was not happening to the extent that it was before. One of the things I really had to work hard on, was to really encourage staff in the same subject area to work together. I required grade levels to meet. Some departments weren't operating the way they should have (Interview, P. G. 1993).

Norms of isolation and separation

By the mid 1980s, the cultural norms of collaboration, shared goals and risk taking which had characterised Byron in the early years, existed only in pockets among groups,
and within some departments. At the whole school level, however, a different set of norms had taken over. As a school, goals were written every year but often ignored. Respondents talked of school policies on discipline that were not pursued by some, others of trying year after year to deal with the insurmountable ‘reputation’ problem and failing. As one teacher reflected “What did we do, I really don’t remember. Except just talk amongst ourselves” (Byron Womens’ Group, 1994). A significant number of staff left the school to pursue creative opportunities elsewhere or were transferred by the system. Of those that stayed, some, like Blair Alden, admitted to just “giving up” and retreating into their subjects and departments. Other became active in sub-cultures, like the federation group and the women’s group. The Heads’ Council was a sub-culture, and even it divided between those who had been at Byron in its ‘golden years’ and those who had been appointed in the late 1970s and early 1980s. A teacher who joined the staff in the mid 1980s identified the major school sub-cultures:

I think there has been a bit of a struggle to try and maintain a bit of the philosophy that was here in the 1970s but there has also been a group that wants to change that. We went through a tremendous transition about five or ten years ago to become like other schools and I think there was a force back then which was pressing for that change. There was a group pressing to keep what Byron already had. These two groups have clashed from time to time (Interview, E. A. 1993).

The old optimism had disappeared, to be replaced by cynicism, disappointment and divisiveness. The diminishing size of the school tended to have a negative effect on teacher learning. As one teacher, who joined the Byron staff in 1971, explained:
In a small school your professional development does not occur within the school, you do not get the same sort of discussion back and forth, how do we modify this, how do you do that? (Interview, G. L. 1995).

Notions of continuous improvement and risk-taking were replaced by fears of political or community reaction. Teachers commented on the “increased political scrutiny.” As one long-term teacher stated, “Everything you do as a teacher is subject to political scrutiny” (Interview, M. H. 1993). “It was much harder to have people work outside the normal school day” as one of the women’s group recalled. Garner stated that, “by the time that I got there we even had difficulty getting people to volunteer for the staff development committee and the funds we did have for it weren’t being allocated” (Interview, P. G. 1993). As described previously, co-operation at the leadership levels was replaced by acrimony, dissension and conflict. The staff that celebrated together in the 1970s had changed significantly. One veteran teacher reflected:

I look back at the corn roasts we had, and you didn’t beg people to come and we really had a great time. Now we don’t even have a formal Christmas function and those things. I don’t know if it is because we’ve got older and have kids in activities or its a laid-back attitude - oh I can’t be bothered so you don’t have that same bonding. We do things as a department not as a school (Interview G. L. 1996).

Betty Kelly said when she left she was told that she had put the love and the fun and the celebration back in the school. A teacher told her, “It was always there but we hadn’t looked at it for a long time”. How could a culture which was strongly collaborative in
the mid 1970s become so fractured and fragile in a relatively short time? Respondents suggested three reasons in addition to the effects of leadership changes, and changes in the school's external contexts - integration of new staff, recruitment of staff, and the rapid enrolment growth and decline.

Integration of new staff

What emerged in the explosive growth period were two cultures on staff: the originals and the newcomers. As one original stated:

Those of us who started at the school came in with a real sense of what we were trying to accomplish. We talked to each other, to administration, so we had a real sense of culture. We went into school early because things were exciting and new. New people came in who didn't have that sense, and we didn't have the time to develop the same philosophy the school had and they felt isolated (Interview, C. S. 1993).

The women's group identified the same phenomena:

I think one of the things we didn't do well was we didn't pick up well with new teachers. We did not have any kind of mentoring programme, whatever, to sort of support these people in all the ways they needed to be supported both in the classroom and out. We got too big too fast. We didn't talk to staff (Byron Women's Group, 1994).
The group went on to comment on the nature of some of the new people:

We got so large and it involved so many that they were hired but not trained well.

We were hiring people for their personal qualities but at the same time I don’t think we made the time to check them out.

We made a lot of assumptions about what they could do.

We did not check out professional skills. We assumed that their personal presentation was enough (Byron Women’s Group, 1994).

Recruitment

The careful recruiting of the Bond era crumbled under the weight of the number of people to be hired in a relatively short time span by people who were already overburdened. Quick interviews replaced careful selection. This resulted in a small, but none-the-less a significant number of new staff members whose actions contributed to the community’s negative perceptions of the school.

A few teachers attracted by Byron’s ‘radical’ reputation were hired. One former department chair who moved to Roxborough reflected a significant view in the professional community when he claimed that “left wingers gave the school a bad name” and “mistakes were made and foolish things were done” (Interview, D. M. 1993). Regardless of motivation, some of these new teachers did “some dumb, dumb things”
which negatively affected Byron’s image. One teacher said to his class “You can call me Bill, you can call me Jones, you can even call me ‘shithead’”. Another teacher had an affair with a pupil and could see little wrong in this. Others failed to check attendance, gave assignments which required little pupil effort and taught courses which were of questionable academic rigour. I recall a pupil who came to me to complain about his grade 13 (upper sixth) course in history. The teacher had a section in which the pupils were to emulate the Australian walkabout. Each pupil was to devise an independent study activity. Since there were no predetermined procedures, standards or indeed instructions, this pupil described it as “walkabout, talkabout, fuckabout”. Some of the people who were hired, dressed in jeans, wore open-toed sandals and used crude language in pupils’ presence. Bond would have considered their behaviour unprofessional and not tolerated it.

Stories abounded among teachers, and of course pupils and their parents, of teachers having pupils chant mantras in the classroom, not disciplining pupils who set a fire in the classroom, using coarse language with and to pupils, assigning make-work projects, and designing experiential courses of questionable academic validity such as the ‘walkabout’. The stories have been elaborated as the years have passed. The few teachers of questionable competence and professionalism hired during the great expansion of the mid-1970s did incalculable harm to the ‘perception and reputation’ of Byron.

**Growth and decline**

The tremendous growth in pupil enrolment in the last half of the 1970s created communications difficulties, and as described previously, processes which had been more
interpersonal became systematised and bureaucratised. Balkanization occurred not only in relation to other schools but also within the school itself. Collaboration tended to be within departments because school size meant there might be four or five classes of the same grade and subject which required within-department collaboration. As the school declined in numbers, departments competed for pupils because pupil enrolments in various courses protected teachers’ jobs. Collaboration decreased not only across the school but also within departments because grades and subjects were often reduced to one or two classes which precluded internal department collaboration. Rivalries sometimes occurred within departments among teachers with similar experience and qualifications as to who was best suited to stay. As one teacher explained, “It can become difficult for people with low seniority when you bring in someone with higher seniority, then it can become competitive, discussions go on behind peoples back, what’s going to happen to me.” Coherence and team building within the school and within departments became increasingly difficult as teachers came and went in relatively short order. Teachers who knew their tenure at Byron would be short often found it difficult to do the extras that teachers have always done. The same teacher asked rhetorically, “How much interest were you going to put in to the designing of new courses and being innovative when you knew that after one year that you were going to be gone? It really has been in and out for many staff” (Interview, G. L. 1995).

Summary

The previous discussion reflects the dissolution of staff collegiality and the retreat into balkanized and individualistic cultures. David Hargreaves’ (1995) provides an alternative approach to the analysis of this transformation. His cultural model introduced
in Chapter Three combines an orientation toward social control and social cohesion. As discussed in Chapter Five, in the early days under Bond, Byron’s culture could be described as a combination of ‘hothouse’ and ‘welfarist’ cultures. It had high social cohesion, high social control and people felt pressured by the shared expectations to innovate and by public scrutiny. The ambience of the school, however, was relaxed and caring, as in a ‘welfarist’ culture. With the rapid expansion and change of leadership, Byron took on the claustrophobic, pressured and controlled aspects of a ‘hothouse’ culture and the increasingly ‘welfarist’ tendency to low social control. By the early 1980s, as a result of declining enrolment and public pressure, Byron would approximate D. Hargreaves’ (1995) description of an ‘anomic’ or survivalist culture. This is a culture which has low social cohesion and low social control, in which people tend to feel isolated, alienated, and insecure.

Another approach to cultural analysis is that of Handy (1995) which uses the metaphor of the four Greek gods, Zeus, the club culture, Apollo, the role culture, Athena, the task culture and Dionysius, the existential culture. In the early years, the South Board was dominated by a ‘Zeus-like’ figure Jim Sizemore who ensured Byron’s creation. Byron under Bond gave priority to the personal needs of the individual staff members and pupils which is a Dionysian quality structured within an Athenian task culture. As the school grew and a less secure principals took over, there was a significant shift to an ‘Apollonian’ role culture which tended to replace interpersonal relationships with structures, and aspects of a Dionysian culture in which the school’s size and lack of cohesion resulted in a great many teachers ‘doing there own existential thing’ and discrediting the school. This Apollo culture persisted during the years of decline, as the school was obliged to conform to Ministry mandates, Board policies designed to ensure
conformity, and collective agreements which determined the rules for determining surplus teachers. It was a culture characterised by roles, rules and a lack of commitment to the kind of Athenian task culture which benefits pupils and makes teachers’ work more productive and rewarding.

Each model provides a different focus for cultural analysis. Andy Hargreaves’ model emphasises the culture of the teaching staff. David Hargreaves provides a more encompassing organisational description, while Handy’s ‘four gods’ reflects a leadership oriented model. Regardless of approach, the cultural pattern which emerges is consistent - from a unity of purpose to division and insecurity, from energy and innovation to entropy and retreat, from a culture which challenged contemporary educational meaning and structures to an environment of rules, roles and conformity. In the early 1970s, Byron would fit Rosenholtz’s (1989) description of a ‘moving’ school. By the mid 1980s it could be considered a ‘struggling’ school. This is a school which is ineffective but attempting to improve (Stoll and Fink, 1996). At no time did the school staff not have the collective ‘will’ to improve, but the conditions which faced them both externally and internally were beyond their skills and energy (Louis and Miles (1990)).

**Teachers’ lives and teachers’ work**

External contextual factors may have accelerated their struggles, but changes in the staff itself over the 15 years from the school’s inception also contributed to the ‘attrition of change’ at Lord Byron

**The Greying of Byron**
By 1985, only 14 of the 65 staff members at Lord Byron had been there in its first few years. All of the 14 were over 40 years of age and seven were over 50. The average age on staff was close to 40 years of age. The impact of declining enrolment resulted in a complement of very few teachers with less than five years experience and a majority with over ten years of experience. An experienced teacher who came to Byron as a department head, commented that “the decline (in enrolment) meant that there was not a wide number of people to choose from, especially young people who could be dedicated to the school”. He added that Byron “had come and gone by the time I got there” (Interview, R. T. 1993). Wesley Walters stated that the staff got “older and more tired”. Walters reflected that becoming more conservative and more establishment is what happens as you get older, especially if you move into administration. In reflecting on his own career he said “I was determined to subvert the smug middle class of Middleton” in 1970, but as principal “I tore down the smokers’ shed” and attempted “to clean up the place” (Interview, W. W. 1995). One long time female teacher at Byron explained how time had affected many staff members:

We don’t run quite as fast and as far with it (new ideas) as we used to. It was moderated a little because we got older now and you get several things happening. First of all, the energy levels are dissipated by the fact that you have eight million other responsibilities. When this staff was young, they didn’t have kids and didn’t have mortgages and they didn’t have other domestic responsibilities. Their parents weren’t ageing, then they had more free time. The collegial relationship was more important so they had more time, it wasn’t that
they had more energy they had fewer demands outside the profession and also they had fewer experiences to make you a little cynical (Interview, J. C. 1993).

Most people at Byron in 1985 were now in phase four or phase five age ranges in which teachers were either 'taking stock' of their careers or preparing for retirement (Sikes, 1885). Phase four is a life stage which is "almost as traumatic as adolescence" (p.52). It is the age in which children are becoming adolescents and parents are ageing. As the previous teacher's comments reveal, it is often a particularly difficult time for women in teaching because women also tend to be the primary homemakers. It is also an age in which some men come to recognise that leadership opportunities are gradually diminishing and that they will probably spend the rest of their careers in the classroom. As both Sikes (1985) and Huberman (1988) suggest while for some men this can be an age of contentment, while others may turn bitter and cynical.

The forty-plus teachers are often the authority figures on staff and have "taken on the role of maintainer of standards and guardians of school tradition" (p.53). Three of the key in-school Federation leaders were in this group. As one of these leaders explained, we were an "interested federation school. We were never rabid and tried to remain reasonable and supportive". Any militancy tended to be directed toward the system. "There was a lot of anger when differentiated staffing was forced out" (interview, J.C. 1996). Two of these three school leaders became President of the South Secondary School Teachers' Federation. One used it as a step towards formal leadership in the system. The other stayed at Byron though the 1980s and provided 'expert' leadership to staff members during the discussions about surplus teachers. His detailed knowledge of the contract and procedures resulted in a rather legalistic approach to the problem.
In 1985 there were twelve phase five teachers, four of whom were department heads. As Sikes (1985) suggests,

senior teachers tend to be in senior posts as heads of departments or faculty and, particularly if they exercise a high degree of control, younger teachers can become frustrated and dissatisfied because they are unable to put their own ideas into practice (p. 53).

At Byron by 1985, we have a picture of an ageing staff with some divisions, especially within the department heads group between the older ‘keepers of the flame’ and younger heads who were more in tune with trends within the province and within South, and ironically more conservative. The opportunities to change this balance of staff were negligible as long as enrolment declined. The principal in 1985, Patrick Garner, described his staff this way:

They certainly didn’t have as much energy in all the things that they had been involved in before. Except when you got new staff. When you were able to hire a new head, and then all of a sudden that head would rejuvenate a department, but that’s the same in any school (Interview, P. G. 1993).

He went on to describe the situation he inherited in 1984:

There was probably greater reluctance to accept change and to incorporate it into their style. I don’t know if that was a function of the school or of the leadership.
I do know it is a function of the staff getting older. I think they had been at this for a long time. They had sort of done their thing for many years and got tired. There are many staff members hired on to the Byron staff who were not necessarily hired to the school or to its changes, and I think that is a difference. Originally staff were hired to a concept and then later on the enrolment grew and people were put into Byron because they were surplus to other schools, or hired to fit the leadership of different principals which in some cases was quite different from the leadership style of the first principal (Interview, P. G. 1993).

Only one person on the staff in 1984 has gone on to a leadership role beyond the department level. That person was a female department head who is now a principal. As one observer commented, “the engines of innovation had left the school,” “given up”, or become frustrated or debilitated by ‘fighting ghosts’ from the past. As one long time teacher stated “We got frustrated because the community didn’t see it for what it was” (Interview, M. H. 1993).

Exhaustion without exhilaration

Most people who spoke about the workload in the late 1970s and early 1980s still commented on working hard but without the same degree of satisfaction as the early 1970s. The exhaustion of trying to maintain the best of the Byron tradition in the face of what they saw was an indifferent, indeed for some, a hostile administration, Board and parent community, just wore on them. People described others as experiencing symptoms of burnout but never admitted to me that they themselves had ‘burned out’. Wesley Walters was typical. He described one teacher who had joined the staff in 1972
as rather typical of the malaise he found in 1980, "Bill Maxwell, bless him, just got older and more esoteric". A total stranger may have been able to encourage more candour than I did, which is one of the disadvantages of a research project in which the interview subjects are friends and acquaintances of the researcher.

The Question of Burnout

Were Byron teachers burned out from years of striving in the face of adversity? The cumulative evidence suggests that the Byron staff experienced many of the symptoms. One advantage of a large school system like South, however, in which there was growth in some areas, is that teachers could move to other schools or alternative jobs. This proved to be a career-saver for some, and a safety valve for others. By looking at Byron through the lens of Byrne's (1994) analysis of burnout, it will become clear that all the conditions for staff burnout existed at Byron in the early 1980s. Byrne (1994) discriminates between organisational and personal factors.

She describes the following organisational factors that contribute to teacher burnout:

- **role conflicts which result from conflicting demands such as demands for both quality and equity in the classroom.** This certainly applied to Byron with its philosophy of equity and its need to compete with Roxborough's academic image,

- **role ambiguity which is lack of clarity about the teachers' obligations, rights, status, and/or accountability - among these are the custodial and supervisory functions which are added to teaching assignments.** By the mid 1980s, Byron teachers were
experiencing the changes brought about by provincial legislation. This meant that more pupils with learning difficulties and more pupils with English as a second language were in teachers’ classrooms. At Byron the stress of these changes was exacerbated by enrolment decline, leadership changes, and the teachers’ deep feelings of resentment towards their educational and parent communities.

- **work overload, not only in terms of hours of involvement, but also the complexity of trying to meet so many, often conflicting, demands.** Most people who came as teachers and principals to Byron contend that the intensification of work, a concept introduced in Chapter Three, if it existed at all, was similar to that experienced in every other school. While the workload was perhaps no heavier than in other schools, Byron teachers seemed to perceive their workload was more intense because they felt unappreciated and certainly misunderstood. The exhilaration which made hard work acceptable in the early years had disappeared. What one teacher had described as a mission had, by 1985, become just a job.

- **classroom climate such as discipline problems, student apathy, and student abuse of teachers “bears critically on teachers' attitudes toward teaching”** (Byrne, p. 649). As one teacher viewed the relationship with pupils at Byron:

  Coming from the school that I taught at before, I have more behavioural problems in my classroom than I did at the other school so it is a different kind of work. I feel that I don’t cover as much of the core content because I’m dealing with behaviour. I don’t have as much energy. It is more intense in the classroom than it used to be (Interview, M. C. 1993).
Certainly, attendance, credit completion and pupil deportment in the school were issues for the community and an on-going source of difficulty for the teachers.

- **decision-making which either ignores or permits minimal teacher input.** Confusion as to the decision-making processes continued through the 1980s into the 1990s at Byron, and teachers who had been used to being consulted, felt decisions were being made by either the administration or the heads without consultation and communication. Many tended to vent their frustration by creating a very active and vocal Federation in the school.

- **lack of social support from both administrators and peers.** As has been stated, this was a pervasive theme at Byron in the late 1970s and early 1980s. As one member of the women’s group reflected:

  I probably left three years too late, and not because I was burned out, I’d had it. I had to take a year off. I couldn’t deal with the pressure any more of working in a school where we talked about the perception and reputation. I couldn’t deal with that any more. It just sapped all your energy. To me it was like swimming up stream all the time. It was exhausting and debilitating (Byron Women’s Group, 1994).

Byrne (1994) also describes two personal factors which affect teachers’ attitudes toward their roles. The first is **powerlessness.** Certainly Byron teachers saw the structures in which they believed systematically stripped away by Ministry and Board decisions. From
having abundant D. S. F. money in the 1970s, staff saw resources dwindle dramatically. New secondary schools were built, and many Byron teachers moved to them. Those who stayed often felt their building’s needs were neglected, and that others were getting a better deal. Enrolment declined, teachers were asked to teach subjects they had not taught previously, or did not like to teach. Some saw courses which they has pioneered in the 1970s, and on which they had worked industriously, eliminated from the school’s program offerings because of low enrolment. Two department heads left the school in protest over this issue. One in fact moved to Roxborough as a classroom teacher rather than yield to the inevitable contraction of his department’s programme.

The second of the personal factors described by Byrne (1994) is self esteem. When teachers use terms like ‘debilitating’, ‘giving up’, ‘frustrating’, ‘fighting ghosts’, ‘betrayal’, ‘lack of support’, and ‘lack of appreciation’, this would suggest that the criticism, the loss of the many high performing pupils to Roxborough, the annual scramble from 1977 to 1985 to decide what teachers must transfer to another school, had a profound effect on the self esteem of teachers at Byron.

In his study of Mansfield High, Peshkin (1978) described the importance that the school reflect the values and aspirations of its community:

At the heart of resistance to changes that would undermine school-community accord are a community’s special qualities - intimacy, belonging, and nurturance. When overlaid with feelings of territoriality they generate a sense of being part of a special people, school, and town. This sense may be in the mind of the beholder and hence inaccessible to critical scrutiny, but it exists as fact for mainstream
Mansfielders. And though these qualities are always in flux, they are treasured as eternal goods, irreplaceable and priceless, the marks of an unchanging or, at least, very slowly changing order (p. 206).

Byron had clearly outrun its community’s ideas of what constituted a ‘real school’. The context for creation and experimentation had virtually disappeared. Unable to find support within the educational and larger communities, the staff turned inward upon itself and expended much of its energies trying to change a persistently negative ‘reputation and perception’. When compounded by wild swings in enrolment, the very meaning, structures, leadership patterns and school culture which had made Byron unique among schools in South, were irrevocably altered. The spirit of change which had energised Byron in its early years had, by 1984, been replaced by an ethos of continuity - only the community did not know it. It was up to Patrick Garner and Betty Kelly to up-date the community’s image of Byron. The time had come to admit that the ‘light in the lighthouse’ was almost out and to regroup and go forward from there.
After 40 years in power, the Progressive Conservative party's control in Ontario ended in 1987, and the Liberal party came to power. O. S. I. S. (Ontario Schools: Intermediate, Senior), the Ministry's curriculum document) which replaced H.S.1, had barely been initiated when the new government, in response to a campaign promise to review education, established a one-man commission, whose mandate was:

To identify and recommend ways of ensuring that Ontario's system of education is, and is perceived to be, fully relevant to the needs of young people, and to the realities of the labour market they are preparing to enter, with particular emphasis on the issue of dropouts (Radwanski, 1987, introduction).

Ontario to the mid-1990s

The commissioner was George Radwanski, a journalist and long-time Liberal. Since he was not connected to the educational community and did not presume to be an educational 'expert', he presented himself as the voice of 'common sense'. His report was initiated in March of 1987 and completed in November of the same year. His diligence enabled the government to try to impress the electorate with the urgency of the issues. His report was generally well received in the community at large, but less favourably viewed by educators who recognised that the somewhat glibly presented recommendations were difficult to implement (Allison and Paquette, 1991). Radwanski's
report suggested a common core curriculum based on principles of mastery learning, along with elimination of the credit system and of streaming at the secondary level. Its suggestions also included standardised province-wide testing, and improved systems of counselling and mentoring. Many of Radwanski's recommendations copied reform efforts initiated elsewhere. Like most of the reformers of the time, he could not see the inherent contradiction of advocating decentralisation through school-based decision making along with more centralised government controls of curriculum, pupil assessment and school organisation (Smyth, 1991). In its 1988 throne speech, the government selectively took from the report the idea of destreaming, as well as the need for accountability. It subsequently announced its 'Restructuring of Education' initiatives. Government sponsored committees developed consultation papers on the Early Years, (three years of age to six), Formative Years (grades 1 [six years of age] to 6 [11 years of age]), Transition Years (grades 7 to 9) and the Specialization Years (grade 10 to graduation). The Ministry of Education also funded Transition Years pilot projects. The South Board was a pilot Board and Lord Byron received support for a Transition Years project. Through the results of these projects from across the province, the evidence from a provincially funded research project evaluating the pilot projects (A. Hargreaves et al, 1993) and considerable consultation with the educational community, two working papers were produced by the Ministry in 1991 and 1992, one on the Formative Years and one on Transition Years. These reports led to three immediate policy initiatives, the destreaming of grade 9 in September 1993 (Pennock, 1993), the Benchmarks Project (Rappolt, 1993) to develop an accountability mechanism for the province, and a common curriculum project for grades 1 to 9 (Wideman, 1995).
No sooner had the Ministry’s work begun to impact schools than another change of
government put most of the previous government’s initiatives on hold. The new socialist
government initiated a three million dollar ‘Royal Commission on Learning’ which
reported in December 1994. Unlike reports in other countries, states and provinces, the
commission’s report, For the Love of Learning did not blame teachers for most of the
problems in education. The report declared:

... as in all matters human, the majority of teachers are neither exceptional or
hopeless. Most teachers say they enter the profession out of their concern for the
kids and we believe it’s true. From what we’ve observed and learned, we’re
confident that most Ontario teachers are competent, caring, and committed; that
they work conscientiously and hard; and day in day out they do a good job (p.14).

Rather, the commission acknowledged the rapidly shifting contexts in which teachers
teach.

In fact, given the constant pressure they operate under, the seriousness of their
responsibilities, the never ending new obligations society foists on them, and the
never ending new changes that boards or the Ministry impose on them, the anxiety
about keeping up with their subject and with good practices that result from the
explosion of knowledge both in their disciplines and in teaching methods - given
all this, even the ordinary teacher seems heroic to us (p.14).

Then, the report eruditely cut to the essence of change in education.
Transforming schools, as we insistently repeat, ultimately depends on teachers. No significant improvements are likely to take place without the active participation of teachers and other educators who actually create and sustain the conditions for learning in schools (p.14).

The commission also anticipated 'right-wing' criticism:

All the educational policy changes and curriculum documents in the world will have little or no effect unless teachers use them in the classroom. All the system-wide testing will have no effect either, unless teachers use the data to improve and refine their programmes and teaching methods (p.14).

The Royal Commission Report also included recommendations for a common curriculum, regular provincial assessments, and parent councils for each school. The report was generally well received among educators for its child centredness, its balance, and its compassion (Hillen, The Spectator, February, 21. 1995, p. A7).

Shortly after the commission reported, the Progressive Conservative party returned to power. In its 1995 incarnation the party now follows the philosophical stance of the ‘New Right’. Its policy of combining severe budget cuts to public services, welfare, child care, health care, and education, with a promised 30 per cent tax cut has established a stance which does not bode well for the child-centred philosophy of the Royal Commission Report. As the former commission Co-chairperson, Gerry Caplan, recently commented:
In general terms I’ve become quite depressed about it . . . It seems largely to have disappeared into the vapor. Virtually every one of the groups that cheered us on after its release has found other initiatives, other priorities to pursue . . . And the few things of substance and importance being pursued have a fair chance of being undermined (Quoted in Duffy, 1996, p. A2)

To date the Ministry of Education has publicly supported the idea of a common curriculum, standardised testing, parent councils for every school, a standard province-wide report card and a self regulating College of Teachers. As the Co-chairperson, commented, the government has “cherry picked” from the commission’s 167 recommendations, endorsing those items which fit most neatly into its philosophy. In particular, he suggests that the government supports ideas that take money out of the system and opposes those which put money back into it. In what one might consider the epitaph for the report, Caplan stated, “Someday when this terrible era ends, and people are able to think about the education system positively again, people may go back to look at the commission report for touchstones . . . I can only hope so” (Quoted in Duffy, 1996, p. A2). What is different about this report from the Hall-Dennis report of the 1970s which also advocated more pupil-centred approaches to education in the province is that For the Love of Learning was shelved before any real attempt was made to implement it.

Interestingly, both reports were opposed by the secondary teachers’ federation. It is ironic that the government and the teachers’ federation who agree on very little, seem to accede to the necessity of opposing policies which promote more pupil-centredness in secondary schools. As Caplan, a socialist and union supporter, notes “from the first
moment, the O.S.S.T.F. has refused to acknowledge the need for a single positive change of any kind . . . They have not backed down from that destructive position for one minute. I don’t understand it. I don’t understand how they see this as a contribution to education”. The Federation’s defence of the status quo, however, is perhaps understandable in the context of the present government’s unprecedented attempts to centralise educational decision-making and undermine the influence of teachers’ unions.

At a recent meeting, the newly appointed Minister of Education and Training for the province of Ontario, a businessman, told senior officials of his department that they must spread the word that the educational scene in Ontario is much worse than it actually is. “Creating a convenient crisis is what this is all about” (Brennan, 1995. p.1), he said. Creating a crisis of confidence, he declared, would allow his government’s ideological package to proceed more smoothly. It is interesting that even though the new government has a number of members with a considerable understanding of education, the Premier has chosen a Minister who admittedly knows very little about the system. The Premier’s reason is that Ministers with no knowledge of the Ministry with which they are charged will come to them as outsiders, and will presumably face their roles with an open mind. Virtually all the senior officials in the education Ministry, appointed by previous governments, have been terminated or transferred to other Ministries. In relatively short order, the government has initiated processes to create parent councils for each school, increase standardised assessment, restructure the secondary curriculum, alter the governance structure and curtail teachers’ right to strike. At the same time it is reducing educational expenditures dramatically. It would appear that Ontario is intent on following the pattern established in Britain, Australia and other Canadian provinces.
The recession of the 1990s persists in the public sector in Ontario. Educators' salaries have been frozen for the past four years (1992-96). Universities, colleges and public education have been heavily affected by budget cuts. The South Board will receive 24 million dollars less from the government in 1996 than it did in 1995. Lay-offs, closed facilities, and wage cuts are among the solutions presently considered. The severity of the cost-cutting is unparalleled in Ontario's history. School boards faced by reductions in provincial grants are considering eliminating a number of programmes, user fees for other services, and reopening collective agreements to increase class sizes and reduce or eliminate teachers' planning time. In a recent speech, the former Chair of the South Board and the leader of its neo-conservative forces stated:

We have been providing an extremely broad based and wide range of services to the students of South for many years. In this time of fiscal restraint, the time has come to prioritize our services and to ask ourselves what constitutes a basic education and then justify each programme and service based on it being an essential for our students as opposed to being nice to have.

Her main target for 'reform' is salaries. She describes how the provincial government proposes to help local Boards:

I believe that the Board must carefully examine the level of salaries and benefits it is paying. Significant issues in this area are retirement gratuities, planning time and the length of the school day. Under current legislation and our collective agreements, the board has little scope in this area. However, the provincial government has indicated that legislative changes may be forthcoming which will
provide boards with greater tools to deal with these issues (Leblovic, 1996, p. A11).

To this end the government has already approved legislation which would facilitate a Board’s ability to eliminate provisions of collective agreements unilaterally.

Needless to say, the teachers’ unions are threatening to retaliate through job actions of various types. The political climate has created an environment in which innovative programmes have, for the most part, been abandoned. Funds for centralised curriculum and standardised testing, however, still seem to be available. If the early 1970s were the best of times, the middle 1990s are the worst of times in education in Ontario. For the South Board and its Director, the provincial move to the political right, merely follows the shift that had already taken place in South.

The South Board to the mid-1990s

The system’s fourth director, Bill Wilson was appointed in 1988. A well regarded superintendent within the system and a former Byron original staff member, he quickly established himself with staff and trustees as a trusted leader. His organisational and political skills enabled him to consolidate the gains of the previous decade and to launch into new strategic directions (Stoll and Fink, 1994). His background in staff development, and his understanding of the change process had convinced him that improving staff performance through professional development held more promise for
improvement than mandates or appraisal systems. One of his first actions was to synthesise and simplify South’s directions.

In conjunction with the senior management team, Wilson incorporated the effective schools work (Stoll and Fink, 1992; 1994) which had been initiated in the mid-1980s to encourage school improvement through an understanding and application of the characteristics of effective schools, with the work of other groups which had carried out reviews of curriculum, special education and staff development into a strategic plan. Through soliciting ideas from both inside and outside the system, and consulting with experts in various education-related fields such as psychologists, social workers and child care workers, the senior administration, supported by the school Board, established the following three directions:

- school-based planning, which “directs our energies and resources through co-operative planning to support and encourage school-based decision-making that is consistent with community and Board expectations;”

- an emphasis on instruction to support teachers in the teaching-learning process and assist them to develop expertise in four areas: implementation of curriculum; classroom management; instructional skills and instructional strategies,

- staff resources to provide quality instruction, through the continuation of a policy to “attract, select, develop, and retain the highest calibre staff” (South Board of Education, Strategic Plan, 1989).
The previous Long Range Planning process introduced by Bartlett, the previous Director, included all the activities in the system with little attempt to create a focus. On-going maintenance activities were included along with new initiatives. This resulted in a long list of goals and activities which staff in schools tended to ignore. Since there was little effort to prioritise or to cull the list, people responsible for carrying out the plan focused on those activities that were easiest to achieve, not necessarily the ones with the greatest potential impact. By establishing a limited number of directions, Wilson's strategic plan enabled all aspects of the system to focus on issues which would have significant payoff. It was much easier to talk about three or four directions than forty or fifty.

In contrast to the traditional top-down approach to change in the South Board, the school was now viewed as the basic unit of change. System leaders external to the schools had to reorient their thinking from order-givers to service-providers. To this end, consultative support was decentralised into area teams, closer to the schools. The 'top-down model' of the previous 18 years of South's history was changed to a 'top-down, bottom-up' model of change (Fullan, 1991). The system provided a broad set of directions through the strategic plan, as well as resources, and the schools developed School Growth Plans to meet their unique needs within these broad system parameters (Stoll and Fink, 1992; 1994). To achieve the goals for instructional improvement and staff development, Wilson persuaded the Board to increase the consultative support for teachers and schools by adding a number of instructional consultants to each of the area teams in the district (Stoll and Fink, 1992). From 1989 to 1992, in spite of reduced grants from the province, the Board continued to support the initiatives in the strategic plan. In successive years the Board approved local tax increases of 7.2 per cent, 14.6 per cent, 5.2 per cent and 8.5 per cent (South Board Budget Documents, 1989-1992). In
spite of considerable public criticism, the majority of the school board members continued to support the provision of the resources necessary to fulfil the commitments made in the strategic plan.

This growth and development under Wilson were short-lived. By 1992, South and the rest of the province were in the depths of a recession. Taxpayer protest groups were springing up all over the province. The Middleton Taxpayers’ Coalition became very vocal and active politically. Led by a former engineer and a bank manager, they continue to conduct a highly public campaign to reduce educational costs. They are highly anti-union in their stance and advocate salary reductions, massive layoffs and elimination of most support services as means of reducing property taxes.

The Board election of 1992 brought the many initiatives that had been generated by the strategic plan to improve schools to a full stop. Five or six neo-conservative trustees reduced Board meetings to confusion and disorder. Little was accomplished in a climate of acrimony, personal invective and political ‘grandstanding’ (The Spectator, 1993). Most votes on issues split 10 to 8. Discussions on issues often led to personal attacks by a few trustees on the Director, other Board officials, or other trustees. In my last year as a senior official I spent more than half of my time answering politicians’ questions, writing reports in response to trustees’ requests, and building political support for policies and directions related to the strategic plan.

Financial support from the province had diminished each year since Ontario’s recession first impacted education in 1992. In 1987, the province paid 35 per cent of South’s educational costs, by 1992 it contributed only 23 per cent (South Board Source of
Education Funding, 1969-1994). The 1994 rate was 16.7 per cent and it continues to be reduced each year. The combination of these reductions and the trustees' determination to protect the ratepayers from additional taxation has led to some layoffs of junior teachers and service personnel, reduced school budgets, and elimination of most professional activity funds. The demands and expectations for service have not diminished, but the resources are shrinking rapidly. While central office is almost paralysed by the political process and Wilson's leadership negated by political 'in-fighting', the schools do their best to ignore the acrimony, and continue to try and move forward in the best interests of pupils (Interview, K. S. 1995).

Despite the challenging political climate in South, the Byron influence continues to be evident throughout the region. Of the present 17 secondary principals, 13 have spent significant parts of their careers at Byron. One reason Byron has come to look very much like other schools is that the others schools have become much more pupil centred and democratic in their operations as a result of the dispersal of the Byron 'mafia'. Initiatives which began with Lord Byron such as semestered timetables, immersion programmes, multi-text English, recreation-based physical education, interdisciplinary departments, individualised mathematics and science courses, personal pupil counselling, and informal teacher-pupil relationships operate in every school in South. In spite of the pessimism which pervades education in Ontario, these leaders continue to exude a quiet confidence that schools will be able to respond to whatever comes their way. Perhaps Lord Byron with its many trials and tribulations has proven a useful training ground for dealing with adversity (Interview, Principals group, 1996).

Lord Byron to the mid-1990s
The arrival of Garner and Kelly at Byron in 1984 coincided with three regional programme decisions which impacted the school. On December 12, 1980, the provincial legislature had approved the Education Amendment Act (Bill 82) which required each school board by 1985 “provide programmes and services for all pupils identified as exceptional”. The South Board responded by approving a plan (South Board Special Education Plan, 1980) stating “that school programmes should allow each pupil to develop his/her potential to the fullest” (p.1). The Board committed itself to a “wide variety of programs and services ranging from full integration in regular classrooms, integration with occasional support to full-day segregation with special assistance for optimal placement”. These programmes were to be conducted in “the most suitable and least restrictive environment” (p.1). Since Byron had always accepted pupils with difficulties, accommodating both the government and board mandates seemed a natural extension of the Byron approach. Schools like Roxborough have found the intention of the legislation much more daunting.

In 1983, the Board’s administration placed the Life Skills programme for mentally challenged pupils at Byron. The school had the physical space because of its rapidly declining enrolment which had decreased by more than 1000 pupils in eight years. Other schools also had space but Byron offered a caring philosophy which had persisted through good times and bad. As Kelly explained:

Byron was the first South school to have a Life Skills programme. It was one of the first schools to integrate the developmentally and educably mentally disadvantaged students into the classroom and that became a way of life. The
kids at Byron were used to walking down the hall and see a mentally
disadvantaged student, they wouldn't say, 'That's Jason he's retarded'. They
would say, 'Jason, your shoe is untied, sit down and let me help you'. They
became really desensitised to differences, not sensitised, there were no differences
(Interview, B. K. 1994).

When the provincial government closed residential schools for developmentally
handicapped pupils. Lord Byron became the regional school for these severely and multi-
handicapped youngsters.

Graham Clark, the former principal of Byron had assumed regional responsibility for
special education. One of his first challenges was to find placements for 30 severely
learning disabled pupils. Previously, the provincial government had provided funds to
educate these pupils in specialised schools in Canada and the United States. Many of
these pupils had behavioural problems and some were physically handicapped. Clark
asked Garner and Kelly to host the 'satellite' programme at Byron. The programme
began in September 1985 and continues to the present as a successful model for
responding to the needs of profoundly learning disabled pupils; it has been copied by
other jurisdictions in the province. Kelly stated some years later that:

there was never any thought of not providing the programme at Byron. The
Board needed a programme and Byron's innovative attitude which still persisted
and the integration concept made Byron a natural home for it and away we went.
We never had flack from staff, or students or parents and it became a small school
within a large school concept and highly successful (Interview, B. K. 1994).
Garner and Kelly worked to make Byron viable. The addition of special education programmes, while laudable, did not stem the outflow of the more academically talented pupils to Roxborough. As Garner explained the problem:

Roxborough was seen as the academic school and Byron as the other school down the road. Parents who were concerned with academics for their kids particularly at the advanced level, wanted to send their kids to Roxborough. I talked to staff and said yes you are doing it (gifted programming), now we have to get it down on paper and we need to communicate that to the community because we are losing the top five per cent and we can't continue to lose 'the cream of the crop' to Roxborough... so we packaged it a little differently to meet a community need (Interview, P. G. 1993).

As a community resident, "I heard so much about the problems with Byron from my neighbours, that I wanted a shot at doing something about it" (Interview, P. G. 1993). It was, he continued,

... a number of years of getting input from the community that made me decide that when I got there, these were some things I was going to work on. You can't work on everything so you have to work on a few things and this whole issue of gifted, making Byron as much of an academic school as Roxborough, and we had to get the message out to the community and we had to do certain things... The other was the whole issue of the athletic programme, and whether or not kids who went to Byron and were concerned about representing the school at a higher level
would get lost. By that I mean Byron's philosophy . . . was that everybody made
the team and got an equal chance to play and winning was not that important.
There was a concern in the community that the kids end up losing the game all the
time so I want my kid out of Byron (Interview, P. G. 1993).

Garner's solution was:

to get a compromise between the two, where winning was important to some
extent, but not the be all and end all, and yet still keep in mind the philosophy of
the school, that is we try to give everybody an opportunity as much as possible,
so we looked at developing the intramural programme to a greater extent
(Interview, P. G. 1993).

Throughout their tenure Garner and Kelly sought to balance the traditional egalitarianism
of Byron with the very real community and social pressures for excellence and elitism.

To further retain their high achieving pupils, they convinced staff to support the addition
of a French Immersion programme as well as segregated gifted programmes. Garner was
a much more directive and decisive principal than his predecessors. Pragmatic and less
visionary in his approach, he and Kelly, who replaced him as principal in 1987, clarified
decision making processes and lines of reporting in the school as well as streamlining
procedural issues. Their approach to the community was to use every opportunity to say
"Byron has changed". In practice, though, the substantive changes had occurred long
before Garner and Kelly's appointments. They recognised that Byron's programmes
were still as good if not better than most schools and worked energetically to alter public
perceptions of the school. When Kelly was transferred to another challenging school in 1992, her successor, Len Denardis was able to report,

The parents I speak to and the type of issues which come across my desk tell me that parents feel very good about this school. Occasionally ... some of the old ghosts still make themselves known, not in any great way that really makes me terribly concerned, but it's still there, just a reminder that public relations needs to be attended to (Interview, L. D. 1993).

Denardis, who had been a practice teacher at Byron in its early days, acknowledged that Byron was more similar to than different from most other schools. He stated, however, that "It is still a pretty unique school in terms of the programmes it offers". It still seems to be more willing to respond to change than many schools in South. Perhaps it does not initiate change but responds to external innovations which fit its continuing pupil-centred philosophy. When the Ministry mandated destreaming in grade 9, many schools reacted negatively. As the vice principal responsible for its implementation in Byron explained.

When you compare Byron’s (Transition Years) plan for the grade nines in September as compared to some other schools, it is probably the most drastic in its changes or philosophy and that reflects back on the staff from way back when. We are always open to new ideas and we did say “yes we think this will work, we would like to try this” . . . I think it provided Byron with mechanisms to do things they have always wanted to do and were going to do anyway . . . (Interview, J. S. 1993).
Byron’s future in 1995 is once again in doubt. With enrolment at the 700 mark, rumours of Byron’s closure, especially at a time of financial cutbacks, are beginning to surface. As new principal, Ken Sutton who arrived at Byron in September 1995, describes the present condition of Byron:

Right now we are in a phase of survival, and survival as an institution and an organisation, and that we will continue to exist and be viable - believe it or not this is a major fear of our staff. Everyone is worried that we are closing down. I’m trying to remain positive and say we will survive but so much of it is dependent on being proactive about wanting to survive. I’m trying to fill the building with Adult education programmes. You can have all the glitz and public relations programmes but if you’re not doing what you’re reare saying your doing it is all for nought. In other words it begins in the classroom with excellence in the classroom (Interview, K. S. 1996).

School image remains an issue which requires constant attention. As one long-serving staff member stated with some frustration,

Living in the community, basically all the time I have taught at Byron, some still consider it the non-traditional school. The image is still there. It is really tiring arguing that. I have a daughter coming here next year. Even in her elementary school we have taken a teacher to task about the philosophy of this school versus the philosophy of Roxborough. It has always been a Byron-Roxborough comparison, not Byron and any other school. It is the traditional versus the non-traditional (Interview, G. L. 1995).
This veteran of the vicissitudes of Byron summarises how the staff view the school in 1995:

I’ve been here for 24 years and we have had eight different principals and I couldn’t begin to count the number of vice principals who have come through here and so it’s a 3/4 year rotation and each principal brings his or her own philosophy. The philosophy Ward brought at the beginning, really by the late 70s and 80s it had largely disappeared. There is definitely a more principal-centred approach. I think in the past more things came back to staff for O.K.’s. Some staff felt that there are things being done behind closed doors. Are there things being done about which staff is unaware? Are there directions that administration is trying to lead this school through that we are not being told about? Ken seems to bring openness and listens to people. I was on the committee to look at decision-making in the school. There was a lot of criticism about Heads’ Council and administration in terms that things were not laid out on the table. Information seemed to get out on the grapevine. You hear more of that. So much now depends on the principal (Interview, G. L. 1995).

The reduction of school size means a smaller Heads group and now there is less representation for components of staff. With so many non classroom people like special education, guidance and the Satellite in the school, some classroom teachers see themselves as having less influence (Interview, G. L. 1995). For example, staff who do not deal with report cards are making decisions on computerised report cards which only affect classroom teachers.
The veteran teacher went on to explain that departments like math and science have had to be merged. The Science people who are very collegial have now been placed with mathematics and the Head is a mathematician. Will he represent the science component of the department adequately? - this is the science teachers’ concern. Family Studies courses have been redistributed among three departments, leaving the Family Studies teachers confused as to who deals with their budgets and who addresses their interests at Heads’ Council. Ironically, these structures are very similar to department structures in the early 1970s, which then were seen as innovative and philosophically sound. This same teacher reported that in science there have been five or six different science teachers through the department in the last five years. Teacher are teaching in areas in which they have paper qualifications but little desire or specialised knowledge. There is not one history specialist in the school.

In the words of its principal,

The school has declined in numbers, which creates the problem of the young teachers leaving. It has become more and more difficult to find people to do extra curricular activities. Many people say ‘well I’ve done that for years but I need a rest from that now - I’m taking a hiatus from this, someone else can do it’. My challenge has been to get people involved. What in essence has happened at Lord Byron, in fact is quite evident, it has become a small school with all the advantages and disadvantages (Interview, K. S. 1996)

In many ways the scenario that Byron followed in the late 1970s and early 1980s
is being replayed in the mid 1990s. It is being played out in a climate of retrenchment and some have used the word fear. In spite of the unrest in the environment, some things at Byron do not change. In the words of the veteran teacher quoted previously:

One of the comments of people who come to school is how warm and friendly the staff is. I hope that is something that never dies here. Kids who come here from Roxborough comment how open the staff is, how available the staff is to help, how willing the staff is to help. I always think that has been here right from the first day I came here. Someone was always there to give you help, and we were always available for the kids, I have always thought of this as a kids' school. Kids do not get lost in this school. The amount of counselling that we do as a staff which is not subject-oriented is phenomenal. We have always done that and have always been willing to do that. Structure and philosophy and things like that are long gone but the open warm feeling is always present. It is something, I have always enjoyed and probably the reason that in 24 years I have never felt the urge to move (Interview, G. L. 1995).

**Personal history to the mid-1990s**

My final six years in South were at central office, and it seemed clear from that vantage point that Byron was considered as just another school and was treated that way. Most of the old antipathies had disappeared, but so had the excitement. I led a great variety of system initiatives which impacted on Byron but which also reflected the changing nature of education in Ontario. In reviewing Board minutes of my time as a superintendent, I found the influence of Lord Byron in my work for the system as a whole. For example,
when the government mandated codes of pupil behaviour for every school, I chaired the
system’s committee which developed a set of guidelines that reflected the pupil centred
philosophy of Byron. The first general criterion was that all codes should “promote a
sense of self-worth and self-discipline”. The guideline required that school codes include
expectations, a rationale for the expectations and “logical, reasonable and enforceable
consequences”. The guideline also required consistency, flexibility and the provision of
“therapeutic interventions”. As I look back, I had subconsciously led the committee to
reproduce a code of behaviour which was very similar to the Byron’s approach in its early
days. The report of the Lord Byron Evaluation Committee in 1971 advocated:

- a democratically organized classroom,
- a sympathetic and understanding response to the efforts and achievements of pupils,
  the provision of abundant opportunities to achieve success,
- the provision of abundant challenge and encouragement, affection from and
  interaction with teachers and other adult role models,
- consistency of purpose between teachers and between departments.

The South Code of Student Behaviour not only contained these ideas, it even used some
of the words like ‘democratic’, ‘consistency’, ‘encouragement’ and ‘opportunities’.

I was also involved in the implementation of O.S.I.S. which required streaming of all
programmes. Many of the secondary principals and vice principals with whom I worked
on this response to the Ministry directions were former staff members at Byron. Our
collective belief in the inequity of streaming resulted in South’s being the only school
board in the province to offer all non-core subjects at one level. If we could not change
the Ministry's direction we could at least subvert it. This made destreaming considerably
easier six years later when the province decided to move towards more heterogeneous
classes.

I led the system's Transition years initiative and succeeded in receiving a grant to initiate
pilot projects in five of South's secondary schools. Byron was one of the five, which
under Betty Kelly's leadership initiated a tutorial system for pupils who arrived at Byron
with difficulty in reading. It was not the most daring of the funded projects, but at least
the school had applied and responded more positively than a number of other schools to
the government's initiative. Similarly, Byron was not one of the leading schools in the
system's effective schools project. My sense after a number of meetings with the
Transition Years Committee and the Principal at Byron was that the staff was tired and
prepared to cooperate but not prepared to make a substantive commitment to yet another
government plan.

My years as a system leader also gave me the scope to initiate a number of projects which
had originally been inspired by my involvement with Byron. For example, Byron broke
the mould on alternative approaches to pupil assessment and I was able to enshrine
principles of equitable, performance based assessment of pupils into Board policy. From
this policy, principles of effective assessment were developed and employed throughout
the system. Reviews of performance assessment reaffirmed the 'Manager's Letter'
process and the C. S. and E. teacher supervision processes originally spawned at Byron.

When I first went to Byron in 1970 I was an expert in my subject field, history. I read no
educational research, and certainly saw little relevance of places like the Ontario Institute
for Studies in Education to the world in which I lived. My M. Ed. Studies at O.I.S.E. in the early 1970s did little to change my mind. At the time, there appeared to me to be little practical application of much of the theory that we were required to learn. The instructors appeared to me to be unable or unwilling to make connections. At Byron however, we discussed ideas, we read contemporary educational literature such as A. S. Neil's *Summerhill* (1960) and *Freedom Not License* (1966), Postman's *Teaching As A Subversive Activity* (1969) and Rogers' *Freedom to Learn* (1969); we wrote thought pieces; we invited in experts like Neil Postman, William Glasser, and William Purkey, and in general lived in the worlds of both theory and practice. Since that time I have tried to live in these two worlds, and since my retirement from the South Board in 1993, I have built a second career as an interpreter of the academic community to the world of practice (Stoll and Fink, 1996). Much of my work on school effectiveness (Stoll and Fink, 1988; 1989; 1990; 1992; 1994; 1996) in which links were made to such academic specialities as school improvement, leadership, and culture, to develop a more holistic conception of change, can be traced in my own intellectual history to those early, heady days at Byron.

I have always felt my years at Byron were important in my professional growth, but the process of recovering my own past for this project has been rather revelatory. I never consciously realised how much Lord Byron has impacted on the way I look at education and life. If a research study of this nature must be meaningful to the author, then this one has more than met that criterion. My three years at Byron, from 1970 to 1973 were the crucible for much of my career from that time. What we tried to do at Lord Byron in the 1970s, perhaps in an unsophisticated way, is what I now advocate in my present writing (Fink, 1992a; 1992b; Stoll and Fink, 1996, Fink and Stoll, forthcoming) and what many progressive reformers now encourage. It is now necessary to turn away from history and
focus on the analysis of the past 10 years. The next chapter, Chapter Nine, will therefore complete the analytical discussion initiated in Chapter Five and continued in Chapter Seven.
By the mid 1980s, the Byron staff had for the most part accepted the fact that Byron was not much different from other schools in Ontario and South. Respondents who reflected on the late 1970s and early 1980s, expressed disappointment, and in some cases anger with both the province and the region over the manner in which their policies had eliminated the uniqueness of Byron. The transition from the ‘lighthouse’ school to a ‘real’ or conventional school like Roxborough evolved slowly and incrementally.

Context

By 1985, most people could not recall how or when Byron became part of the mainstream of education in Ontario. Some respondents spoke nostalgically of the past, but recognised that the world had changed and Byron with it. Most teachers accepted, and in fact supported attempts to tighten the curriculum and restrict pupils’ freedom. As the school’s principal from 1991 to 1995, Len Denardis stated, “I think Byron has come in line with the South system and certainly provincially” (Interview, L. D. 1993). He elaborated by describing educational policy as a swinging pendulum and presently the school has “just swung along with a more conservative swing of the pendulum”. In his perception, Byron had become more traditional and the system and the rest of the schools more liberal and innovative. A teacher who joined the Byron staff in 1982 summarised the Byron of the past decade:
There has always been a collection of teachers who have been here from the beginning who have been very supportive of Byron's original philosophy, and of course their numbers are dwindling as the years go by, but they have always brought back that philosophy that students come first, that the compassionate teacher is the effective teacher. They are still here and they are a minority, but they are a vocal minority. I think they are very good for the school (Interview, E. A. 1993).

Contextual influences had supported experimentation in the early 1970s, and eroded Byron's uniqueness in the decade from 1975 to 1985. By the mid 1980s, the school was no longer considered the experimental, non-traditional school in the district. As a veteran teacher observed, "Walk through Byron now, what is non-traditional about Byron now? We have separate classes and what goes on in the classrooms is what goes on in every other classroom in the region. It is a very traditional type of school" (Interview G. L. 1995). Even though Byron by the mid 1980s was a "very traditional type of school" its public image remained at least 10 years in the past. In the mid and late 1980s, the school made a concerted effort to convince its community that it was a conventional academic school like Roxborough.

Dealing with the Byron Image

In 1985, the principal of Roxborough told me that his school's positive image was so well established, it would be impossible for him to alter that perception even if he tried. Similarly, Byron's reputation as the 'Hall-Dennis' school had become part of the lore of South and accepted as fact. Real estate sales people still use residency in the
Roxborough area as a selling feature and advise people who buy in the Byron area to transfer to Roxborough (Interview, K. S. 1996).

As the Byron and Roxborough stories reveal, public perceptions of a school play an extremely important role in the internal school dynamics. Sarason (1982) makes the point that

one cannot understand the failure of efforts to change and improve schools unless one deals with school-community relationships and their largely implicit character - implicit, that is, until their legal-traditional-cultural features are pushed into the forefront by conflict and controversy (p. 37).

Sarason could well be describing the history of Byron. A high percentage of Roxborough graduates complete university, and its teams are generally successful. The influential parents would naturally feel their pupils are getting a good education especially because it is not much different from their own. Less academic pupils and less elite athletes find Roxborough a challenging place (Hargreaves et al., 1992). There is a great deal of advice in the educational literature on creating an image (Gray, 1991; Smedley, 1995; James and Philips, 1995; Davies and Ellison, in press) but for the new Byron leaders and the staff, the challenge of altering a negative image was largely uncharted territory. Many of the innovative schools of the late 1960s and early 1970s contended with ‘image’ problems (Fletcher et al., 1985; Doremus, 1981a; 1981b; 1981c; 1982).

In 1984, Byron’s public perception was perhaps at its nadir. The educational programme offered at Byron was very similar to its competitor ‘down the road’. Some departments were stronger, some not as good but on the whole, as the supervisor for both schools in
1984, it seemed to me that the product of each was broadly comparable. What was not comparable was the public’s perceptions of the two schools. Byron’s new principal and vice principal, Garner and Kelly, presented a very different image from their immediate predecessors. Garner had a physical education background. Kelly had been a dramatic arts teacher. They both presented a very conservative and confident image. Garner, in particular, had dealt with sensitive political issues in his previous assignment, and possessed the type of background and skills to help him deal with Byron’s problems. He described how he saw his role when he moved to Byron:

I arrived at the school when I think it was in drastic need of new direction and I was sort of the stabilizing force for three years. I certainly wasn’t a change agent. I never saw myself as a change agent that all of a sudden turned it around and put it in the opposite direction, although Betty who followed probably was. I came when probably it was on a downslide. Like it had hit a peak - now it had had lots of peaks and valleys - but it was now on the down-slide and something needed to happen to sort of stabilize it before it took its next leap (Interview, P. G. 1993).

Changes to the initial Byron organisation initiated by the provincial and Board policies had been generally accepted by staff. Byron’s structure was similar to most other schools. Byron, which at its peak made over 50 submissions to the Ministry annually for permission to run experimental courses, by 1985 made only one request. Perhaps more significantly, enrolment had bottomed at 975 pupils in 1984 and remained fairly stable for the next six years. Garner and Kelly did not have to face the frenetic addition and then disheartening reduction of staff of the previous decade. Indeed, they did have some limited opportunity to restructure their heads group and infuse the staff with some
younger people. By 1985, only four of the original chairmen remained and they too
would either retire or move to other schools within the next five years. In addition, the
system supported their efforts to maintain enrolment by allowing Byron to offer French
Immersion courses and by adding the Satellite programme. Since many of the key people
in senior administration were products of Byron, they were aware of the school’s history
and prepared to provide support to the school. At the same time successive principals of
Roxborough worked cooperatively with Walters and later Garner and Kelly to reduce the
debilitating features of the rivalry between the two schools and helped to organise joint
staff development activities which contributed to better understanding between the two
staffs. External circumstances were favourable in the late 1980s to attempt a Byron
renaissance.

**Meaning**

Both Byron administrators had asked to be assigned to the school. Garner who lived in
the community and had sons attend the school, saw it as a challenge to re-establish Byron
as a vibrant and productive school. He particularly welcomed the opportunity to do what
his predecessors had been unable to do - change the community’s perception of the
school. Kelly looked to the opportunity to resurrect something of Byron’s creative and
experimental past. In retrospect Kelly described the decade from the mid 1980s to the
mid 1990s:

> I have to say in the early years, in the ‘golden years’, certainly Byron was master
of its own destiny. When that innovative leadership was recognized for their
strength and appointed to other positions, Byron then became a follower not a
leader in the late 70s and early 80s. We were able to capture back some of that leadership when we accepted responsibility for things like the Satellite, French Immersion, and Life Skills. We started to look at our strengths and recognize what we do well (Interview, B. K. 1994).

Garner and Kelly inherited a staff which somewhere along the way had lost or at least misplaced the sense of meaning which energised its early years. A teacher who joined Byron in 1982 described the school staff during her tenure:

Byron has pretty well progressed from being that kind (progressive) of school in the beginning to becoming or trying to become a fairly traditional school today. It has become quite a traditional school. Maybe a little more student focus and that might reflect the original philosophy. Although I don’t know if the philosophy is that different from other schools. I think the philosophy of all the schools in South is to take our students and make them productive. I don’t see that we are any different than any other school. I think there is a genuine caring for students here but I think most schools are the same (Interview E. A. 1993).

A teacher who also joined the staff in the mid 1980s stated that:

I think that the people who have been here longer are sometimes more apt to change than people who have been here a shorter time, and maybe just because of the nature of the people. People talk about the beginnings of Byron - teachers who have been here a long time. They say that some of the things in the Transition Years are like 20 years ago so they see that as a good thing whereas
some of the people would like to take things more slowly when we have things
written down and have content and courses and direction (Interview, M. C. 1993)

By accepting programmes which few schools in the system would or could deal with,
Garner and Kelly adopted a risky strategy, but in the long run one which helped Byron to
recapture something of the spirit of its early days and support its continuation. As one
teacher explained,

We have a very mixed clientele here, and we have more special education kids
than in most schools, and at least as many problem kids as in any other school -
maybe more, but we tend to work with them better because there were some
strategies set up from the very beginning. The school had a very well trained staff
and an active special education department. We have a place where our kids can
be dealt with on a one-to-one basis and looked after (Interview, J. C. 1993).

A long-time school secretary responded to the question, what makes Byron unique?

I think it is the diversity of programme that we have at this school. We have Life
Skills, day care, the Satellite programme, we also have the A. C. L. D.
(Association for Children with Learning Disabilities) - which is the learning
disabilities resource. When our life skills first came into the school, some people
wondered how are the students going to react. I have never seen a life skills
student made fun of or retaliated against in any way. They are usually
intermingling in the foyer at lunch and I think it is just great. Even the little tykes
in day-care - they have their lunch in the cafeteria - they have little tables in the back of the cafeteria (Interview, H. C. 1993).

A member of the women’s group, who left the school in the early 1970s, described the contemporary Byron:

I think the philosophy of the school is well grounded and I think that has something to do with the staff that you bring in, the kinds of professional development, the kinds of experiences. I still feel that when I walk into Byron, and I was in Byron last week, and I still felt it. I feel it in the way the satellite is set up, the T.M.H. (Life Skills unit) has been set up there and all those things. I know that they take their toll but nevertheless I still feel that the basic philosophy, that kids come first is the overriding philosophy (Byron Women’s Group, 1994).

A teacher who moved to Roxborough in the late 1980s told the story, with pride in his voice, of an autistic boy who wandered into his drafting class and was welcomed by the regular pupils. Each day the boy returned and actually learned to do a little drafting with the help of the pupils in the class. Another teacher described how welcoming the school had been to her own son and how he and his friends found the school atmosphere “very warm and not as formal” (Interview, R. L. 1993).

Byron’s response to the Ministry’s Transition Years initiative reflected the shifts in the school’s meaning and culture in the late 1980s. When the Ministry provided money for pilot programmes related to the destreaming of grade 9 and other related initiatives, Byron submitted a proposal. The school’s principal requested funds to provide extra
counselling for incoming students, a tutorial system for underachieving readers in grade 9 and for some interdisciplinary grade nine units. As the Board’s official responsible for the six regional projects, it was clear to the committee I chaired that the Byron plan was the least ambitious of the five that were funded. It should be added however, that while Byron did apply, eleven other schools did not. The first two aspects of Byron’s project which were initiated and pursued by individual departments were quite successfully implemented. The third project, which necessitated interdepartmental co-operation never got very far. From a cultural point of view, balkanization had replaced collegiality. Innovativeness which had once helped to define Byron now resided largely with certain departments, particularly special education and guidance, both of which were ancillary to the regular programme of studies in the school.

What had evolved by the mid 1980s were at least three parallel narratives which gave Lord Byron meaning. The first suggested that Byron was like most other schools, perhaps a little more pupil oriented but even here there were other schools at least as caring as Byron. The second narrative implied that Byron, because of its acceptance of a diverse pupil population was quite different from most schools. There is a certain amount of truth to each claim. The pupil-centredness of the early days continued to exist in pockets, if not pervasively. It was well accepted among the special education professionals in South that Byron was more responsive to the need of less advantaged students than more traditional schools such as Roxborough (Interview, J. G., 1996). At the same time, there were other schools in the system which were as open, if not more open, to attempting to meet a diversity of pupils’ needs. A new school built in the late 1970s in the northern part of the region, for example, not only included the regular range of pupils, but also mentally handicapped pupils and students from the adjacent school for
the hearing impaired. A third narrative, which in some ways made Byron’s staff somewhat schizophrenic, was: “We are an academic school and as demanding and rigorous as ‘the school-down-the-road’”. To summarise using Broulitte’s (1996) categorisation of meaning, Byron’s initial developmentalist and social meliorist aspirations which had united staff in the first few years of the school’s life had yielded, at least in part, to the humanist and social efficiency arguments in the immediate community and the general educational context. To accommodate these purposes the school created self contained gifted programmes, elitist school teams, and French Immersion programmes, and promoted participation in academic competitions, among other initiatives. Byron philosophy had evolved over 15 years from a shared sense of meaning to a more fragmented and less coherent idea of what it was about.

Leadership

Garner was appointed to Byron for quite different reasons than his predecessors. Bond, Martin, Clark and Walters were all seen as innovators, and to use Burn’s (1978) term, transformational leaders. Clark and Walters had been original members of the Lord Byron staff assigned to Byron to recapture some of ‘the Byron spirit’ (Interview. E.L., 1994). Garner, however, was assigned because he was a proven manager and administrator and politically astute. His style and experience would more closely fit those of a transactional leader (Burns, 1978, Leithwood, 1992; 1993). At Byron he was obliged to negotiate a new meaning for Lord Byron in the face of compelling contextual pressures. He also had to work with a divided and in some respects hostile community, as well as with his educational colleagues to establish the school’s credibility. At the
same time, he and his vice principal initiated the ‘Satellite’ and ‘Life Skills’ programmes which helped Byron’s survival.

The leadership literature often implies that managerial, transactional leadership models are unproductive, and that transformational leadership is the only way (Burns, 1978, Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Leithwood, 1992). As my colleague and I have suggested elsewhere, however, it is really the situation that tends to dictate the style and the methodology (Stoll and Fink, 1996). Leaders who build trust, exude optimism, respect others, and operate with integrity, can respond to shifting contexts effectively (Covey, 1989). While Garner tended to lead in more conventional ways, it could be argued that the circumstances also required this style of leadership. It could also be suggested that his handling of affairs reflected ‘principled’ leadership. He made his intentions very clear to staff and acted consistently to re-establish Byron’s viability as a school. His handling of the competing micro-political elements at Byron when he arrived reflects his approach.

An important part of Byron’s legacy from the early 1970s had been the balance of leadership among administration (senior management), the chairs’ (heads’) council and the staff. Ward Bond had fostered leadership at all levels, and was described by a number of respondents as the leaders of leaders. By 1984, the vicissitudes of the previous 14 years had destroyed this leadership balance and replaced coherence with confusion. Garner’s first action therefore, was to sort out decision-making issues. He made it very clear, as Bond had many years before, that since the principal was accountable, he would be the ultimate decision-maker. As he explained,
From my point of view, I have to have a greater amount of say if you like. I’m willing to give the heads’ group a certain amount of authority, but certainly not all of it. It is a reflection of my style of principal. The other aspect of that is a function of the strength of your heads. In some cases throughout the history of Byron there were some extremely strong heads’ groups and therefore the principal was probably inclined to give them greater say, whereas, there were looking back over the years some heads’ groups were not nearly so strong and looked to the principal to be more directive, as well as staff. At times staff say the same thing “tell us what you want”. Staff wanted a leader who was going to make a fair number of significant decisions, although they didn’t want to be told everything - they just wanted some input (Interview, P. G. 1993).

Garner continued,

Well, at the heads level there was still strong feeling, because it was made up of quite a few old Byron people. They wanted to have control, and they wanted to direct things because they saw the ways things should go, simply because they wanted some of the old philosophy to continue, because we were new and they weren’t sure in what direction we were going to go. So, from the heads’ group there was certainly a strong feeling that they should continue in their position of leadership. However, at the staff level I found there wasn’t necessarily that overwhelming feeling that they wanted to be involved in all the decisions. In many cases, they got tired of having every thing brought back to them . . . oftentimes they would say ‘why don’t you just go ahead and make the decisions, we don’t want involvement in that it’s something you should be doing anyway’,
whereas there were other, more crucial issues that they wanted to have some input . . . certainly when I arrived on the scene there was willingness to let administration make decisions on less crucial issues (Interview, P. G. 1993).

As Betty Kelly recalled:

Our hardest task was to get the Heads Council to understand that their role was one of decision-making certainly, but also one of facilitation and one of engagement. They needed to gather the opinions and views of all the staff and it became shared decision-making. I can remember sitting down and developing a decision-making model and taking it to heads and saying okay, there are some decisions administration is going to make and some decisions that Heads’ Council is going to make and some decisions that need to go to staff. Can we look at the kinds of decisions that would fall into these categories and can we agree that we will start to do some of these things and engage all people (Interview, B. K. 1994).

By the end of Garner and Kelly’s first year, much of the bickering over who makes what decision had disappeared. In a sense, the two administrators with the heads and the staff had arrived at a consensus which was very similar to arrangements in most other schools. If anything, Byron’s leaders were somewhat more directive because they perceived a need for fairly quick action to redress some imbalances that had evolved over time.

When their successor Len Denardis was asked if decision-making at Byron was different from other schools in his experience, he replied,
I don’t think so. I think when we get down to the crunch, the hierarchy still exists. People look to those hierarchies and that determines some decision-making as well, but the feeling still is that somehow it needs to be collaborative and people do try to do that to some extent (Interview L. D. 1993).

He went on to explain, however, that the issue “is very much alive” and how he had to set up a committee to review the patterns of decision-making in the school. It would appear that by the time Garner and Kelly appeared on the scene many staff were quite content to let the formal leadership make decisions. A decade of rapid growth and decline, crises and stress, had left many staff members content to work with their pupils and let others deal with the school-wide issues. As a teacher who has worked with all eight Byron principals observed,

I think there was a period of a lot more consultation and collegiality than we have time for right now. I think when you have a system under pressure like the 1990s you have an administrative group who deal with each other rather than the staff. When we had more flexibility people were prepared to put time into the process, now it is just not possible to consult. Staff says we really can’t influence anything so tell us what to do and let us get on with it. (Interview, J. C. 1995).

In the early days of Byron, leadership was purposely spread among many informal and formal leaders. Decision-making was a shared activity among senior managers, department heads and the total staff. Ward Bond had the ability and perhaps the fortuitous context to maintain a delicate decision-making balance. Bond saw himself as
the 'leader of leaders' and acted on that conviction. His replacement Martin, perhaps because of his inexperience or the changing school circumstances, moved the leadership dynamic in a somewhat more directive and less collegial direction. Clark and Walters attempted to resurrect the more democratic ethos of the early Byron experience, but found that the situation around them had changed. The rapid decline in enrolment, a more directive provincial presence, and the on-going 'image issue' forced Walters to make some very unpopular decisions which alienated some heads and staff members. At the same time, many staff felt he should be even more directive and less collaborative, just make the hard decisions and get on with it. Walters was torn. He wanted to provide leadership and promote involvement, but found himself caught up in contextually-created managerial issues. At the same time, the staff had become more argumentative because of the effects of declining enrolment. This is the situation Garner and Kelly found in 1984.

They assumed a more directive, transactional stance and moved quickly to clarify the balance among themselves, the heads, and the staff. Bond's delicate balance was purposely shifted to ensure more direction by senior managers. This tendency has continued to the present. Leadership would appear to be more centralised around the senior leaders and less with the staff as a whole. While it would be easy to suggest that this was a power grab by principals, a number of my respondents suggested that many of their colleagues just wanted to stay in their departments and classrooms, and leave school-wide issues to the principal and department heads. With so much decision-making taken over by the Province and by the Board, there was a feeling that "we really can't influence anything so tell us what to do and let us get on with it" (Interview, J.C. 1993). This move from more democratic to more directive approaches to leadership has parallels
in other new and innovative situations (Gold and Miles, 1981; Fletcher, et al, 1985). In Kensington school, for example, (Smith et al 1987), the innovative Colby and the revered Mr. Edwards were ultimately replaced by the 'company-man' Mr. Wales.

Structure

The only structure from the original Byron concept that remains in 1995 is the semestered timetable. In most other respects Byron's structures are the same as or very similar to other schools in South and the province. In virtually every other facet of schooling, the Ontario Ministry and the South Board have progressively reduced school discretion by raising expectations while mandating organisational structures, curriculum, and assessment procedures. The days of creation and experimentation for Byron are, for the moment at least, history.

In 1984, Garner and Kelly used what little room they had to manoeuvre to try and reenergise the school. They therefore altered or added structures to effect change on two distinctly different levels. On one level, to exorcise the 'ghosts' of Byron's past, they initiated structures which would appeal to the parents of the more able pupils who might opt to attend Roxborough. A redesigned programme for gifted pupils, the introduction of French Immersion, and elite athletic teams moved Byron closer to the more traditional Roxborough. At a second level, to ensure that the excess space in the school was filled, they added the Life Skills Programme, and the Satellite unit. The difficulty of integrating challenged pupils into regular classes helped to renew Byron's historic commitment to pupils, regardless of ability or background. This balancing of the twin pulls of perceived
quality and equity reinvigorated Byron and stopped the ‘entropy’ of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

Changing perceptions

Middleton, as one staff member described it, is an “unbelievably middle-class community. A school like Byron would be loved in Toronto” (Interview R. J. 1993). Since most identified gifted pupils in South came from middle and upper middle class homes (South Board Assessment Data, 1993), Garner congregated these pupils in specifically identified classes so that their parents were assured that the pupils’ learning needs were being met. Previously, their programme was enriched through a pull-out programme in which they were congregated for certain themes and activities. Interestingly, this programme had received a provincial award for its innovativeness, but parents of brighter pupils still did not consider it to be the equal of Roxborough’s more elitist segregated programme.

What Garner did was more cosmetic and organisational than educationally different, but it did create a perception that met the parents’ expectations and enabled Byron to retain many of the brighter pupils.

Similarly, Byron’s reputation for allowing anyone who wanted to participate to play on school teams created an impression among influential elements of the community that Byron was not interested in winning in sports events and reinforced the image of a non-competitive, ‘artsy’ school. Garner supported his new physical education head’s desire to establish competitive teams for competition and redirected resources to improve intramural sports. Byron soon became a power in South’s hockey league and competed quite successfully at the provincial level. At the same time, Garner and Kelly encouraged
the dramatic arts programme to expand. Led by a well known teacher, and supported by administration, ‘The Lord Byron Players’ brought Byron considerable positive public notice. Another strategy Kelly promoted was to involve Byron in the Canadian Academic Decathlon. Byron had traditionally avoided elitist academic competitions and its image had suffered because of this apparent avoidance of competition, although Byron had participated quite successfully for many years in Board and provincial Mathematics competitions. Teams of pupils of different ability levels competed in the academic decathlon. Byron won the Canadian championship two years in a row and remains very competitive every year. A veteran staff member who lived in the community praised the public relations efforts of Kelly and Garner:

Betty did a lot of being in community, and rah rah Byron. She brought Byron from that, I don’t know, if the word is crisis in the early 80s. There was a real down that everything was at fault. Patrick was the beginning of the turn-around and Betty carried on with it and really gave Byron much more high profile to the point that there were people saying very positive things about this school (Interview, G. L. 1995).

He provided the following example:

One thing about Betty, things had to be done with style. She insisted that you do things really well. We have neighbours whose son came to Byron for his last year, they couldn’t believe our commencement ceremonies. There has been a shift (Interview, G. L. 1995).
School procedures were tightened. Pupils were required to take a full programme. Dropping a course was made more difficult. Discipline and attendance were closely monitored. With these visible changes in place, both administrators met with community groups and communicated one message ‘Byron has changed’. As Garner admitted, we just kept repeating the message ‘Byron has changed’ and in time we began to hear back the same message ‘Byron has changed’. As Garner admitted the Byron programme, organisation and in some ways its philosophy had changed long before he arrived, but his and Kelly’s task was to get the message out to the community which they did with considerable success.

The Board’s optional attendance policy is a useful barometer of their success. Before pupils can change schools, parents must follow a procedure which requires the involvement of a school board official. In the early 1980s, as the board official responsible for Byron and Roxborough, I would receive 50 to 75 requests from parents to move their pupils from Byron to Roxborough. By 1988, the flow had reversed. Roxborough pupils who opted to finish their school careers early wanted to move to the semestered system at Byron. It became an issue at Roxborough because many of these pupils were among Roxborough’s most academically proficient. The principal at Roxborough even initiated an attempt to semester Roxborough to stem the tide of pupils. A community backlash prevented this attempt. A major argument used was that semestering would make Roxborough like Byron.

Reviving the Byron past
At the second level, the inclusion of a diversity of programmes and pupils, became a source of restored pride for the school over the next ten year. As Len Denardis commented:

Let me say this, although our school looks similar to other schools, it is still a pretty unique school in terms of the variety and spectrum of programmes that we offer at the school. Let me list them. We do have a day care programme here for the little kids. Although the ‘Y’ (a community group) runs its own programme they are integrated not only in terms of the facility being here but in some of the activities we have. We have the Satellite programme which is a regional programme and that provides an interesting mix for the school. We do have a Life Skills programme. We do have the Bronte Creek programme (an outdoor education immersion programme) which is now regional but administered out of this school. These five programmes certainly make this an interesting school to be in and to administer (interview, L. D. 1993).

While the inclusion of less advantaged pupils into the Byron mix did little to enhance its reputation in middle class Middleton, it did provide Byron with a uniqueness in the South school community, and it did reconnect the school to its egalitarian past.

Term appointments for heads

Denardis also highlighted another Byron difference, the staff’s collective desire to retain some difference in its headship structure.
When I came here and did my entry plan, one of the things the staff got into that they felt very strongly about was this notion of term appointments, and it goes back well to the whole notion of being a democratic staff and what that means basically is that every three years every position of responsibility is open and anyone can apply, the incumbents as well as people from across the system and I was told that the staff felt very strongly about this (Interview, L. D. 1993).

When Board policy established regional guidelines for department heads which allowed staffs to have some say in their schools’ structure, the Byron staff decided to make their headship a three year term appointment. The move for term appointments was led by a teacher who was a past president of the Federation, and a member of the math department. In the words of the former Federation president, headship positions “should not be held sacred”. He stated that the notion that “once a person was appointed a department head he or she was a head for life made little sense at the time” (Interview, R, N. 1996). He indicated that some department heads at Byron wanted a graceful way to step down, others were considered by other staff members to be inept and the principal needed to make a decision, and more importantly he saw it as a way to provide opportunities for potential leaders. The mathematics department, for example, had a number of aspiring leaders. The members agreed among themselves to try to have a rotating headship similar to university departments. A survey of staff on the issue revealed that a significant percentage of staff was supportive of the idea. The two teachers, who led the initiative were able to convince the principal of Byron at the time, Garner, and the former federation president was able to persuade his colleagues to support this departure because the staff had voted for it. Perhaps the underlying reason
for this support for the concept was the feeling that Byron had strayed too far from its
democratic roots (Interview, R. N. 1996).

Denardis described the importance to Byron’s collective attitude:

We felt very strongly, what ever you do don’t tamper with that (term
appointments) because we the staff feel strongly about that. I accepted that and I
like the notion and strongly support it. What’s interesting of course as we put it
to practice is that when these six positions came open we made one change. One
incumbent did not get his position back. Now it’s weird, we really support the
notion. Indeed when the decision was made there were some ripples. In spite of
that, the people conceded that the best person got the job and this was a person
from outside the school as well. The friendships and the ties to the individual
who was the incumbent made some people unhappy or maybe sympathetic or
even sad but somehow the philosophy held up (Interview, L. D. 1993).

Principals such as Denardis supported the idea of term appointments because it gave them
the opportunity to hire to their concept of the school. This is something Bond had in the
early days. From the staff’s point of view, control over headship appointments was one
of the few ways in which they can feel truly empowered. The idea of term appointments
has been adopted at a few schools in the South Board, but not in the comprehensive form
which operates at Byron.

Culture
It would appear that Byron in the past decade has found its comfortable niche. It is no longer the front-runner, the high profile school, nor by the same token, is it the recalcitrant school opposing even the most innocuous changes. As a teacher who joined Byron in the early 1980s explained:

I would like to think that we are flexible and open. I don’t necessarily think that we are trend-setters any more. I think there are other schools now. Looking at the Transition Years coming along, I don’t see us in the forefront as doing dramatic new things. I see other schools if anything doing more than we are doing. We are taking a fairly conservative approach (Interview E. A. 1993).

From a principal’s perspective, Denardis makes a similar point. We experience “the same kind of resistances that you might find in other schools”. He added:

People learn from their experience. I don’t think there is anyone in the school who has been here since the school opened who feels badly about the programmes the school has had. I think there are some people however, who feel badly that some things somehow got out of hand, and some programmes were misinterpreted by the community, or discipline issues, or whatever issues might have been, were misunderstood by the community and are therefore quite cautious now when change is presented. They want to make sure, in fact good common sense things, make sure that it’s well thought through, that all the ramifications of changes are considered and that things are put into place to communicate the changes. There still are a few people who, as soon as a new idea is presented, the
excitement of the new idea makes them want to run as far as they can with it
(Interview, L. D. 1993).

A teacher who joined the staff in the mid 1980s commented that,

Even in the Transition Years some of the people who were saying “let’s be careful
how we implement some of these notions”, were people who were here from the
first years, but because of prior experiences didn’t want us to jump feet first into
something that might later turn out to be as positive as we felt initially and
therefore perhaps, to be burned again with the same kind of stigma that Byron had
at a period of time in its development (Interview, R. L. 1993).

Another teacher who came to Byron in the late 1980s from a large traditional school in
the northern part of the region asserted that “it is no different from either of the schools I
taught at before. People consider what has to be changed and they react according to the
wisdom of the change” (Interview, C. F. 1993).

A culture of caution

The evidence seems fairly clear, that some of the old change rhetoric, what Goodson and
Anstead (1993) called ‘collective memory’ survives, but Byron has lost the initiative to
lead and is content to follow others. At a time when there is comparative stability for
staff, when the community appears supportive, and the old rivalry with Roxborough is
significantly less intense, there is little desire to risk upsetting the status quo. Byron has
blended into the mainstream of the continuity of education in South while retaining through its special programmes a glimmer of its more open and unique past.

**A congenial culture**

Similarly, it would appear that Byron's traditional congeniality persists. Many respondents commented on this aspect of the school's culture. Betty Kelly observed:

> I came to Byron in 1984 and I had a three year old daughter and a son who would have just been going to kindergarten. These are really intensive years for the parenting role and motherhood and all of that sort of thing. Byron has a tendency to cloister around people on staff and they help one another. There is informal support. They celebrate well and they cry together and out of that comes a real bonding . . . Byron was really good for me because there was that support and that encouragement to keep going and recognition for what I did (Interview, B. K. 1994).

A female teacher observed that:

> I came in the second semester to start at the last minute to cover a couple of geography classes. The one thing that still stands out in my mind is from day one, the staff sort of embraced you and took you in and you immediately became part of them, and there was that sharing and warmth and sense of belonging . . . and I think students sense that very same warmth and openness (Interview, R. L. 1993).
A woman who works in a department with a majority of men declared,

I have been very lucky here. I have a wonderful department where everyone is truly co-operative. I don’t know if all the departments within Byron or all the departments in other schools can say that. We are one of those really close, co-operative sharing groups (Interview E. A. 1993).

A Teaching Assistant who came to Byron from another school district commented on decision-making and explained that:

Within the department I worked last year there was a lot of meetings, too many meetings, we had a lot of input from the bottom level. As a T. A. I have a lot of input into what is going on. They closely listened to what I had to say . . . and the head took it to the principal. Within the hierarchy of the chain of command, things happen that way I didn’t see much other than these small meetings I was involved in. Anything that I suggested strongly that needed to be done was done. They listened to everyone equally and made everyone feel their opinion mattered, which struck me as a nice thing in comparison to where I had been (Interview R. J. 1993).

The evidence of congeniality is fairly consistent. People genuinely care about each other and their pupils. The bond is particularly strong among the women. While congenial as a total staff, it would appear that genuine collaboration occurs within departments or small work groups. There is evidence of a balkanized culture modified by some interdepartmental co-operation. The school at present has only 700 pupils. Teachers
often teach in more than one department. The reduced size of the total staff, plus the interdependency of cross-departmental teaching, makes school-wide collaboration somewhat easier. What comes through strongly, however, is a staff which is reticent to take risks, does its job, and will co-operate with change initiatives, but in the present climate of retrenchment, is quite content to enjoy the stability for as long as it lasts. Contentment, as opposed to the exhilaration of the early years, is one way to describe the present culture of Byron.

Byron today has more social controls than in the past and less social cohesion. In David Hargreaves’ (1995) terms, Byron is tending towards a more formal type of school culture similar to Roxborough. Its teacher culture may be described as balkanized (Hargreaves, 1994) because professional and personal support tend to be based on departments. The content of Byron’s culture also looks quite similar to other schools in South. Its commencements are quite elaborate, principals’ pictures appear in the hallway, examinations punctuate the school year, and awards and trophies decorate the entrance to the school. Interestingly, however, when asked the question, who were the school heroes? Ward Bond’s name came up many times from people who had never met him. What Byron was has still not been forgotten.

Teachers’ lives and work

Themes of congeniality and contentment permeate teachers’ comments about their work and their lives in the 1990s. With the standardisation of school organisation as a result of Ministry mandates and collective agreements between the Board and the Teachers’
Federation, Byron people recognise that the intensity of Byron's workload was similar to other schools but with some differences. As a veteran teacher observed,

Teaching is the same in every school - it is open-ended. You can go till you drop. I think the only way the teaching load is any different here is that I think more teachers like what they do. Certainly teachers were happier with their jobs here, and you would hear that at social gatherings (Interview, J. C. 1993).

Another teacher elaborated on this theme:

I really don't see any difference between this school and the other schools. I see the same type of profile where some teachers do a lot, and some teachers do quite a bit and some teachers don't do quite enough. That's probably not too much different than other schools . . . There is great willingness on the part of some when a committee needs volunteers or for a sport. There isn't any kind of bellyaching that I have experienced in any other schools where people stepped back rather than stepped forward. Here whenever something needs to be done, people step forward and that speaks well of the school. In terms of intensity, I wouldn't say that is here (Interview, E. A. 1993).

Patrick Garner who was not only Byron's principal, but continues his involvement through his wife who is a present day staff member, felt that the workload at Byron is no different. He did suggest, however, the work is different.

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It is part of the culture that there is an expectation that you will form some sort of personal bond with other staff members and with the kids. It is the way we operate around here. But I don’t see it as inordinate stress. I think it is just, when you come there, you sort of gradually begin to do those things because other people are doing them and they seem to really work (Interview, P. G. 1993).

Betty Kelly who taught at Roxborough before her appointment to Byron developed this idea further:

I don’t think that Byron works that much harder than Roxborough. I think they work differently. At Byron, the staff look at students as literally a lump of clay that can be molded and directed and challenged and stretched and they are not afraid to push the kids forward to take advantage of opportunities and there is a lot of energy that goes into that. Sometimes you have to create the opportunity. It just doesn’t happen. At Roxborough, because of its traditional background and its community acceptance, you don’t have to create the opportunities so much there - so the work is different. So one is a creative energy force and the other is just taking advantage of the situation - a different kind of work is being done (Interview, B. K. 1994).

A teacher who has stayed at Byron for the past 24 years described the changing nature of his work, but also the adaptability of people at Byron:

In the 70s there were still jobs for kids who didn’t go on to university. I used a mastery approach in which students received either an A, B, or an Incomplete. It
was a phenomenal amount of time I put in. It was nothing for me to be here at 6 o’clock at night working with kids and then go home and prepare for the next day. I kept my mark book from that era just to remind me of how hard I worked. The work load we are dealing with now are the social problems the kids bring into the classroom. Kids not knowing where they are going - heading towards. They are bringing into the classroom a lot of society’s problems. I don’t know whether those issues were as obvious to me back then. In 24 years the social issues have changed, society has changed. They look out there and they see no jobs and for a lot of them it is doom and gloom and they have no idea what to do. On an emotional level I am just as tired as I was back then. There has been a change in how I taught my courses trying to get every kids to complete and having stacks of different quizzes, and kids coming in to take tests or to catch up. Now I teach pretty ‘lock-step’, all the kids do the same things at the same time and then we proceed on. The only place that that is different is the Satellite where they work at their own pace which brings me back to the 70s where kids are doing different things at different rates which makes your work load much different (Interview, G. L. 1995).

This teacher agreed to an assignment in the Satellite unit working with severely learning disabled pupils to ensure the continuation of a well qualified but junior science teacher in the school. In commenting about this challenging assignment, this senior teacher acknowledged that his Byron work in the 1970s was important to his transition. “I think I have been able to adapt to that. If I had come from a traditional classroom and into that, I think I probably would have walked out after the first week, and having all these
kids asking different questions. Without a doubt, the 70s helped me to adapt to that” (Interview, G. L. 1995).

In some ways this theme of general contentment, and to a certain extent disengagement from the larger educational issues, reflects the ageing of the staff and Sikes’ (1985) fourth and fifth life cycle stages described in Chapter Three. Of the 49 staff members in the 1995 school year, 32 were over 40 and 12 were over 50. Two of the nine department heads were also over 40 and four were over fifty. Both the present principal and vice principal are over 50 years of age. Only one staff member was in her first five years of teaching. In addition to the normal ageing of a staff, enrolment declines in the previous five years have meant the continuing loss of younger staff members. Of the people from the 1985 to 1995 era that I interviewed there appeared to be little of the resentment or cynicism that Huberman (1992) identified as the product of ageing among some teachers. While the principals did identify some individuals who could be described as ‘just getting by’ on a daily basis, the general tone of the teachers was one of dedication to their pupils, their subject areas, and departments. The kind of ‘pro-Byron’ rhetoric that one heard in the early days has for the most part disappeared. At the same time, the people still at Byron appeared more positive than some of the former Byron people who had moved to other settings. Interestingly, while the ratio of males to females remains about the same as the early years, one to three, six of the nine department heads at present are female as compared to none in the first five years of the school.

A Byron original who left Byron after three years, describes the situation for her and other teachers in the province in the 1990s:
I think more expectations are being put on teachers all the time. You are expected to be teacher, Mom, guidance counsellor, advice giver, parent contact - you are expected to be everything to everybody. It's become impossible. I think probably the burnout rate is going up, certainly the frustration level is going up, and then you get more and more dumped on you from the Ministry that are not well thought out . . . Teachers are going to give their best to the kids despite the system, not because of it but it means you try to deal with the kids and fight the system at the same time. I think teaching is not as much fun as it used to be simply because the creativity level has been taken out of it to a large extent. The whole focus of the province on what education means has changed so I think we are not turning out as well educated kids as we were, they are just not as knowledgeable (Interview, G. G. 1993).

The contrast between the collective attitude of the Byron teachers and the attitude of the teacher for whom the ‘fun’ has disappeared, may reflect the ability of Byron’s staff to adapt to changing conditions over time. The pupil-first orientation at Byron has enabled it to adapt to the most significant change in Ontario’s education in the past 25 years - the wide range of pupil abilities for which schools must now be responsible. Byron has always welcomed a diversity of pupils and has learned to deal with this range of abilities, while other schools like Roxborough struggle. What has also changed in the past few years is the stability and predictability of education in Ontario. Four changes in provincial governments within ten years, successively more reactionary school boards in South, and the on-going recession in Ontario, have created fear and apprehension in schools. The history of Byron has been fraught with instability and unpredictability, and over time the staff members have learned how to adapt to changing circumstances. It is probably true
that they do not work harder or even more intensely than other schools, but there is some evidence that they do work smarter.

Even though the Lord Byron High School of the present looks remarkably different from the Byron of 1975, one thing has remained - the pupils come first. The ability to shape the school to the pupils' needs over time in the face of adversity has in the last analysis enabled Byron to respond to changing conditions in the 1990s. Few school staffs can face the millennium with more collective wisdom on meeting the diverse needs of pupils, and responding to an unpredictable and inherently unstable environment than Lord Byron's. At the same time, Byron's survival as a viable school for a diverse pupil population also speaks to the role played by the South Board. In our present era when governments seem intent on the destruction of school districts (L.E.A.s), Byron's relationship to the South Board provides evidence of how the Board ensured leadership, and sufficient enrolment to ensure that it continued to provide a quality education for its pupils.
Chapter 10

Implications of The Study

In 1995, Lord Byron High School held a festive 25th anniversary. Pupils and staff returned in overwhelming numbers to celebrate their time at Byron. They shared a common bond of having participated in an experience which was unique in the educational history of Ontario and in South. They also shared a sense that this experience significantly influenced other settings in South, and perhaps in Ontario. The schools in the South system are more pupil centred now, less bureaucratic and more flexible than they were 25 years ago. School leaders tend to be more democratic, open to change, and pupil oriented than principals were 25 years ago. Forty percent of the secondary principals and vice principals are female. 25 years ago there were no female secondary school principals and only one vice principal. While it would be difficult to support the claim that these changes are directly attributable to Lord Byron, the continuing powerful influence of the men and women of South who spent significant parts of their careers at the school suggest that the Byron experience has and continues to influence the South Board of Education. Of the 17 secondary principals in South in 1995, 14 had spent at least three years on the staff of Lord Byron. Of these 17, eight were part of the Byron staff during its ‘golden years’ in the early 1970s.

The dispersal of these leaders over time illustrates the double meaning of the ‘attrition of change’. On one level, the loss of key people with leadership abilities was one of many factors which contributed to the wearing away of change in Byron. At a second level, however, as they moved to other settings within the South system these leaders helped wear down barriers to change in other schools by another process of ‘attrition’. It will be
my purpose in this chapter, therefore, to document this influence of Byron on the South system, as well as to review the two other major issues described at the beginning of this thesis - the existence and nature of a life cycle for new educational settings, and the identification of possible ‘danger points’ in the creation and institutionalisation of change in new and innovative schools. I then outline some of the implications of this study for policy development. This chapter concludes with some suggestions on possible applications of this study and the research methodology employed in this thesis.

The life cycle of a new setting

In the introduction, I posed the question: is there a ‘life cycle’ to new and innovative schools which leads to the attrition of change? This examination of Lord Byron suggests that there was a very definite, and definable pattern in Byron’s evolution. From its creative and experimental origins, Byron evolved through a phase of overreaching and entropy, to a third stage of survival and continuity.

Creation and experimentation

Like all new schools, Byron was, at least in its first few years, an act of creation and experimentation which brought with it unique opportunities and challenges.

The role of Zeus

Most of the examples of new, innovative schools described in Chapter One were initiated by a Zeus-like (Handy, 1995) district chief executive officer (Fullan et al 1972;
Bernbaum, 1973; Gold and Miles, 1981; Smith et al 1987). Sizemore's relationship to Lord Byron is but another example. The support for the school of this style of leadership is a mixed blessing. As has been found at Countesthorpe College (Bernbaum, 1973; Watts, 1977; Evans, 1983) and in other studies (Gold and Miles, 1981; Fletcher et al, 1985; Smith et al 1987), the C.E.O. can facilitate a school's creation and early development, as well as protect his or her innovative school from critics in its initial stages, but his or her sponsorship can also be a burden for the school. The C.E.O.'s enemies become the school's enemies. This leaves the school vulnerable when the protective C.E.O. moves on.

The planning committee

In a number of cases of new and innovative schools, the C.E.O. authorised an expert committee to plan for the school (Fullan et al, 1972; Fullan and Eastabrook, 1977; Gold and Miles, 1981; Smith et al, 1987). Parents and community people are usually not included in this planning which creates a potential conflict between "professional judgement and citizen participation in decision-making" (Gold and Miles, 1981, p. 5). In one case of parental involvement (Gold and Miles, 1981), parents perceived they were being patronised, which perhaps is even worse than being ignored. From the beginning, schools such as Lord Byron are typically designed, planned, and opened with limited involvement of the people for whom they are intended - the pupils and their parents. This initiates a pattern of school-community relationships, which often leads to miscommunication, misperceptions, and misunderstandings. In the 1970s, the planning groups of most innovative schools acted as though they though they assumed they knew what was best for the community and saw no necessity for consultation. The silence of
some studies on this approach would suggest the authors' lacked awareness of this failure to consult the proposed school's community (Smith and Keith, 1971). As others (Peshkin, 1978; Gold and Miles 1981) have documented, educators' conceptions of what is a 'good school' (Lightfoot, 1983) can often be at odds with parents' conception of a 'real school'. This undervaluing of community concerns appears to be a major contributor to the attrition of change in many innovative settings (Woods, 1979; Evan, 1983; Smith et al, 1987). It was perhaps the most pervasive and debilitating problem for Lord Byron High School.

**In-house critics**

As well as inadvertently alienating important segments of their parent communities, the planning elite of innovators tend to set up their newly created schools for criticism from other professionals because they have shared both the C.E.O.'s encouragement and a learning experience which sets them and their project apart from the rest of their colleagues within the system (Fullan and Eastabrook, 1977). As Sarason (1972) explains,

... the creation of settings (in its earliest phases) almost always (if not always) takes place in a context, containing conflicting ideas and values, limited resources, a sense of mission and superiority on the part of some and a need to preserve tradition on the part of others, the need to protect the setting from outside influences, and that this context almost always includes, or quickly is seen as impinging upon, large numbers of existing settings (pp. 56-57).
Schools such as Countesthorpe College (Fletcher et al, 1985), Kensington (Smith et al, 1987), and Lincoln Acres (Gold and Miles, 1981) faced the same kind of hostility from sources internal to the school system. Hargreaves (1984) describes the kind of 'contrastive rhetoric' that critics in at least one other school used to demean a non-traditional British school, Countesthorpe. By being 'high profile', schools like Byron, Thornlea (Fullan et al, 1972), (Fullan and Eastabrook, 1977), Lincoln (Hargreaves, 1994) and Beachside (Ball, 1981) often invite criticism by antagonising colleagues in other schools by implying that the 'new' way is the only way. Certainly Byron's first two principals' relationships with fellow South principals did not help Byron's reputation, nor did the air of superiority that many respondents admitted they held towards their colleagues in other schools.

The initiating principal

The very act of deciding on a first principal is a crucial step in the evolution of a new setting. Sarason (1972) makes the point that "Leaders usually choose leaders, and if those who choose do so without real understanding of the dynamics and ramifications of the context out of which the new setting has emerged, it is no wonder that wrong choices are made" (p. 49). Some initial leadership choices proved disappointing for the initiators of new schools (Gold and Miles, 1981; Smith et al, 1987). Byron was more fortunate in this regard. The skill of the initial leader in securing resources, gaining support from interest groups, and identifying and developing a core group is crucial at the creation stage. The support that Ward Bond gained from the Federation for alternative staffing and leadership patterns was vital to the school's operation. His imaginative departures from conventional uses of space and time, and the roles and job descriptions of teachers...
and department heads laid the basis for the innovative nature of the school. But under less skilful leadership these departures from convention also produced antagonisms with such stakeholders as the teachers’ federation and the community. His skill and acuity, however, as well as his charisma, made him very difficult to succeed.

Sarason (1972) identifies the departure of the initiating principal as the first “symptom of decline” because it usually reflects conflict “around his policy, power, and personal style” (p. 141). Ward Bond’s departure, in the minds of many, was the first step in Byron’s ‘attrition of change’. Unlike Smith and Keith’s (1971) Kensington school, or Gold and Miles’ (1981) Lincoln School, the principal’s departure at Byron was not greeted with celebration but with sadness. The choice of a successor for the initiating principal is a major factor in determining whether the school’s innovations survive or disappear. The Byron story reinforces how important it is for systems to attend to succession planning.

**Teacher recruitment and commitment**

The original Byron staff was carefully chosen by Bond. When asked how Byron had influenced his school, the principal of Roxborough in 1970 replied, “it took some of my best teachers” (Interview, J. P. 1996). In fact he was careful to make the point that many of the people who rose to leadership positions out of Byron had been at Roxborough first. There is no question that new schools tend to attract enthusiastic and energetic teachers (Fullan et al 1972; Smith et al, 1987) and Byron was no exception. In virtually all cases of change, teachers worked with intensity and commitment (Woods, 1979; Ball, 1981; Gold and Miles 1981; Smith et al, 1987). The support they received from the school’s administration, the school system, and their own collaborative efforts determined
whether teachers experienced exhilaration, or as in the case reported by Gold and Miles (1981), exhaustion. As Apple (1986) suggests, many change efforts which are imposed, tend to promote intensification of teachers' work and the deskilling of teachers, leading to burnout (Pines, 1982; Byrne, 1994). The level of commitment in Byron's first number of years was extraordinary. People literally 'lived' the Byron experience, sometimes to the detriment of family and other relationships. As one observer commented, the Byron staff spent so much time together engaged in exciting and creative work and challenging conventional thinking that it was inevitable they would question other relationships. To some Byron teachers, he suggested, Byron was an 'aphrodisiac'.

The energy people put into Byron was fuelled by personal belief, the excitement of the school's notoriety, and by the thousands of visitors who came to see this 'state-of-the-art' school. In time, however, the visitors stopped coming. Criticism and adverse mythology shook people's convictions in the essential wisdom of the school and its practices. What had been exhilaration, for many became exhaustion. The experimentation which had characterised the 'golden years', and which was encouraged and had led to promotion for so many teachers, seemed only to fuel the school's critics. Certainly by the late 1970s there was emerging evidence of intensification and 'burnout' produced by the second phase of Byron's evolution.

**Overreaching**

As with other schools before it, Byron also experienced what Smith and his colleagues called the 'liability of newness' (1987). The very act of creation at Lord Byron had within it the 'seeds' of organisational difficulties. In a sense a dialectic emerged. Forces
which promoted the new organisational order, paradoxically contained within them forces which could result in longer term disorder and instability. The challenge for the succeeding principal was not only to encourage staff to transfer loyalties from the originating principal to the innovative meaning and concepts of the school, but also to establish his own credibility to ensure that the seeds of discord never germinated.

At Byron, the leadership and staff continued in the second four years of the school’s life to add innovative programmes, while at the same time attempting to consolidate the initial innovations. This overload or ‘overreaching’ placed pressure on the creative structures which harbour these ‘seeds’ of disorder and they eventually germinated into serious and in some cases irresolvable difficulties. Drawing on the conceptual framework used throughout this thesis, the following examples illustrate this point.

Context

Byron benefited from the favourable provincial and Board climate for innovation. The Hall-Dennis report still enjoyed public support in the early 1970s and Sizemore as Director in South at the time encouraged innovation and used his considerable influence to support Byron politically. By the middle 1970s, that favourable climate had changed. The province was in full retreat from the progressivism of Hall-Dennis, and Sizemore had retired to be replaced by less supportive and less dynamic leadership at central office. The opposition of colleagues at Roxborough, and throughout the system, began to have an impact on public opinion.
The criticism from other educators, the people ‘who should know’, gradually undermined the community’s confidence in the school. The first two principals of the school had involved the community in the school to a greater degree than virtually any other secondary school in the province, yet there was still a significant and influential element in the community which was unconvinced. Byron’s initial prominence and early efforts by Bond and Martin to court the community had kept this undercurrent quiet. However, the growing tide of professional criticism, along with changing contextual factors, and internal problems at the school related to enrolment increases created a climate for the expression of this unrest. Lord Byron continued to institute new programmes, while attempting to resolve the problems of a dramatic increase in school population. The context and climate had changed but the school had not.

Similarly, Byron’s initial deviations from convention had been implemented with the reluctant approval of the teachers’ Federation. The most controversial feature was the use of money that normally would have been used to pay teachers, to hire teacher assistants. From a union point of view, Lord Byron had pushed the bounds of what the Federation could accept (McDonnell and Pascal, 1988). When the Byron principal gained approval to use this money for ‘things’, he overreached the original basis for the Federation’s agreement for D.S.F., and the ‘seed’ of Federation uneasiness developed into a contractual dispute which effectively ended this experiment by 1978.

Meaning

Byron was intended to be a ‘lighthouse’ or model school. It publicised, and arguably even flaunted its uniqueness, its innovativeness, its ‘newness’. It put pupils not content
first. It espoused caring, humane relationships, challenging but individualised programmes, and democratic decision making. In the 1970s, in the minds of many people, this philosophy and its supporting concepts were not those of a ‘real school’. Roxborough, by contrast, was a ‘real school’. Critics waited to find evidence of faulty implementation to demonstrate a flawed philosophy. They found it in the pupils’ use of free time. Most other schools gave pupils few options as to how to use their time at school, whereas, Lord Byron gave each pupil one hour per day to use at his or her discretion. As I explained earlier in this thesis, supports were put in place to help pupils use their free time in constructive ways such as pursuing independent study or attending enrichment activities. When the school had only 900 pupils, this free-time ‘structure’ was not a problem because there was only a small percentage of pupils who misused their time. However, the school’s rapid rise in enrolment led to an increasing number of pupils’ making poor time-use choices. While the percentage of pupils who failed to make productive use of their time did not change in relative terms as the school grew, in absolute numbers there were significantly more pupils who did not use discretionary time productively in the staff’s view. In effect, the school had failed to adapt the ‘structure’ of free time to the new enrolment realities and was overstretched in its capacity to deal with a significant increase in the number of unsupervised pupils. The behaviour of a few of these pupils contributed to the community’s view that the entire school was lax, its pupils poorly disciplined, and that the curriculum lacked rigour.

These stories were repeated and exaggerated so often, that they become part of the Byron ‘folklore’. Long after free time for pupils disappeared, the image of its pervasiveness and misuse still persisted. The structure of free time, and the meaning of Lord Byron had become synonymous in the minds of many staff members. To give up
free time was to give up the essential meaning of the school, which they were unprepared
to do. In addition, a few teachers recruited during Byron's growth years contributed to
the school's negative reputation by doing what Blair Alden had called "dumb, dumb",
things. These teachers acted on a perception of the school as being quite unstructured,
undemanding of pupils and somewhat 'laissez-faire' in its general ethos. These
interpretations of the meaning of Lord Byron were certainly quite different from the
original intent. Unfortunately as with other innovative schools, as Alden stated, it took
only one foolish act such as pupils chanting, or pupils engaging in 'walkabouts' (See
Chapter Seven) to undermine the very many good practices of the Byron staff.

Leadership

The 'overreaching' was in some ways a function of leadership. As the first principal,
Bond was, as most people commented, a hard act to follow. His departure after only
three and a half years created a succession problem for the school Board. Many
respondents questioned the system's choice of Bond's successor - a very young,
ambitious and innovative person who intended to push the Byron concept even further.
While hindsight is '20/20', a number of respondents suggested that a consolidator not
another innovator was needed - a 'Mr. Edwards' not a 'Mr Shelby' (Smith et al, 1987).
The delicate decision-making relationship between management, department chairs, and
staff gradually became unbalanced. This complicated the micropolitics of the school by
creating rivalries among the three groups for control of the school's policy-making
processes. The positive politics of the early days became confrontational in the 1980s.

Structure
As in the case of free time for pupils, some structures which had worked well for 900 pupils proved inadequate for 2000 pupils, but Byron persisted with these structures because they were part of the original organisation. Each teacher, for example, was required to teach four classes rather than the customary three in other schools. This arrangement enabled the school to provide assistance for teachers in the classroom. As the school grew, increasingly more resources were spent on community programmes, additional guidance and administrative personnel. Since the original intention was to use the D.S.F. money for teacher aides, and secretarial and administrative support for classrooms, a number of teachers began to question these ‘new’ uses of the funds and the additional workload which produced them.

Similarly, flaws in the building were exacerbated by the rapid increase in the number of pupils. The noise and logistical problems caused by the mixing of grades and courses in large open areas had created difficulties for teachers and pupils in the early days. With the rapid increase in pupil numbers these difficulties became even greater. When doors and walls were ultimately installed the heating and cooling systems often failed. The halls were too narrow for easy pupil movement. The speciality areas such as art and music rooms became overcrowded. The school, however, continued to add experimental courses, maintain its open access to the community, and admit any and all pupils regardless of past school performance. These policies had contributed to the school’s innovative ethos in the early days because the structures were designed to respond, but school growth both in numbers of pupils and teachers stretched the structures to the breaking point. Throughout the 1970s, the school remained reluctant to alter its own basic ‘grammar’ which had enabled it to prosper in the early years. This failure to adjust,
while continuing to innovate and experiment, contributed to the ‘attrition of change’ in Lord Byron.

**Culture**

In Chapter Five, it was argued that Byron was a ‘collaborative culture’ (Hargreaves, 1994). It was also pointed out that criticism, even in the early days, had contributed to Byron’s becoming isolated as a school in relation to the rest of the region (Fullan, 1993). In addition there were signs of ‘balkanization’ within the school as well. The rapid increase in pupil and teacher populations led to a more fragmented and less cohesive staff. Perhaps more debilitating for the school was the introduction to the staff of a few teachers who pushed the Byron ideals to the ‘extreme’ (Interview, G. L. 1995) and irreparably damaged Byron’s reputation. The need to continue to be new, unique, and innovative resulted in these selections.

**Teachers’ work and lives**

Like all new and innovative schools, Byron placed tremendous pressure on people’s energy levels and personal lives. After five years of being under constant public scrutiny many teachers felt a need for some respite. There was a significant exodus of original staff in the mid 1970s. Rather than pausing to consolidate, more innovations were introduced to the point where by 1980 the incoming principal felt that many people were ‘burned out’ (Interview, W. W. 1995). As a result, the staff was unprepared to cope with the difficulties of declining enrolment and contraction of programmes in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Many of the school’s difficulties that I have described were masked in
the mid 1970s by the growth, the availability of money and the ‘overreaching’. The problems of community perceptions, pupil misbehaviour, and staff turnover surfaced once the pupil population began to decline. The school turned inward for support and reassurance and a period which I have described as entropy ensued.

Entropy

In response to disorder, systems often become closed to their environment and lose energy. In scientific terms this is called entropy. Systems that remain closed ultimately expire. From the middle 1970s until the mid 1980s, the staff sealed itself off as a school, and took refuge in their departments inside the school. Byron staff members expended inordinate energy solving problems inherited from earlier days such as the discipline problems precipitated by free time, and the loss of pupils to Roxborough. Simultaneously, they faced the image problem, shrinking resources, loss of key staff members, and internal divisions, to mention just a few of the issues. The staff looked inward for comfort and tended not only to shut out the critics but also new learning. As one non-Byron respondent commented “I was always concerned at Byron that there was a bit of groupthink - that even though they were supposedly liberal, it became a liberal ideology and little else could crack through”. He went on to use the example of Byron’s refusal to participate in competitive, elite sports. He added “they were almost disdainful of other schools” (Interview, B. F. 1996).

1983 was the low point in the school’s life cycle. The principal was ill, rumours of imminent school closure abounded, and Byron was losing over 60 pupils a year to Roxborough. Questions of the school’s survival surfaced periodically. Since the Roman
Catholic school board required a school in Middleton, it was suggested by more than one senior official that Byron should be the school. The time had come for a totally new direction. As Wheatley (1993) has stated, systems which open themselves to new learning become “part of the process by which the system lets go of its present form so that it could re-emerge in a form better suited to the demands of the present environment” (p. 19).

Survival and continuity

With the appointment of a new leadership team in 1984 and a levelling off of the enrolment decline, the school moved into a third phase. This enabled the new principal and vice principal with the support of staff, parents and senior system managers, to move the school in a more conventional direction while at the same time ensuring the school’s survival by inviting regional programmes to be housed in the school. In this way the innovative past was merged with the conventional present to help create a more stable environment for succeeding years.

The result of the work of Garner and Kelly was to place Byron very much into the mainstream of schooling in South. This pattern of stabilisation also occurred in most other long term change projects (Gold and Miles, 1981; Evans, 1983; Smith et al 1987). Unlike Kensington School (Smith et al 1987) and Lincoln School (Gold and Miles, 1981), however, Byron did not sink into mediocrity. It retains some of its uniqueness in the way it treats its pupils, its inclusion of high risk pupils in regular classes, and the diversity of its programmes. In most ways, as has been documented, it is more similar than different to other schools in the district now.
The attrition of change

A second purpose for this study was to document factors leading to the attrition of change in the case study school. To provide a summary and to avoid repetitiveness, the following briefly draws together the factors leading to this attrition by using the conceptual framework which has pervaded this work.

Context

The following contextual factors contributed to the attrition of change:

- changes in the political climate at central office meant that Byron lost its unique support. There was also the hostility of the educational community, the parent community and the teachers’ Federation;
- Byron had to compete for pupils and credibility with Roxborough a well-regarded, traditional school;
- rapid increases in enrolment led to less care in staff selection, problems of integrating large numbers of new staff and pupils, and pressures on structures designed for a smaller school;
- rapid decline meant the loss of younger teachers, innovative programmes and pupils to other schools;
- standardised staffing procedures built into the collective agreement meant the loss of younger teachers.
Meaning

The changing meaning of the Byron experience was affected by the following factors:

- the political and ideological climate in the province and the school district changed from one which supported and promoted innovation to one which constrained innovation and change;
- new staff members, not socialised to the Byron philosophy, and therefore less committed to its success, especially those teachers ‘force transferred’ to Byron during its growth years;
- the loss of the ‘critical mass’ of innovators who had internalised the Byron ideal;
- the gap between the Byron conception of a ‘good’ school (Lightfoot, 1983) and the public’s conception of a ‘real’ school (Metz, 1991).

Leadership

The following factors related to the selection, promotion and locus of leadership contributed to the ‘attrition of change’:

- the early departure of the first principal;
- the change from Sizemore to Laxton in leadership at central office meant that Byron had lost its special status in the eyes of the senior administrators of South;
- the promotion of key school leaders out of the school;
- the difficulty of succession planning and the challenge of replacing Bond;
• the breakdown of the decision making balance between the management, chairs (heads) and staff;

• fewer people on staff felt empowered because so many decisions had been removed from the school by the South Board and the province. When combined with the appointments of more directive principals, this factor resulted in the gradual attrition of the 'leader of leaders' concept;

• the micropolitics of the school became more divisive because of contested decision-making procedures, 'balkanized' departments, and declining enrolment.

**Structures**

These structural factors contributed to Byron's retreat from innovation:

• changes in Ministry and Board policies undermined important innovative structures, Federation hostility and the growing indifference of senior system managers compromised the innovative staffing patterns;

• the availability of flexible resources ended rather abruptly, forcing readjustment of school procedures;

• walls went up in the building, doors were added, and the physical openness that had facilitated staff and pupil interactions ended;

• structures like free time for all pupils did not hold up under the pressure of numbers;

• some innovations like experiential programmes, and community programming, pushed too far, too fast and created serious image problems for the school;

• enrolment decline forced the abandonment of courses, and created *inter* and *intra* departmental rivalries.
Culture

The following factors reflect changes which took place in the cultural norms of the school over time and further contributed to the ‘attrition of change’:

- the shared school-wide goals of the early years tended over time to gain less commitment as teachers retreated into their departments and classrooms;
- of the criticism it received from other professionals and from segments of the community; the collective staff confidence in the school’s purposes and activities wavered as a result;
- the collaboration of the creative years turned into ‘balkanization’ and ‘individualism’ (Hargreaves, 1994) in the years of enrolment decline;
- the continuous learning of the early years became less of a school focus and more of a department or individual activity, if it occurred at all;
- the changing political and philosophical climate eroded the willingness to innovate, to try, and to risk;
- the spirit of mutual support and help continued throughout Byron’s 25 years particularly among the women but the focus tended to be on personal more than professional support;
- the diversity of teaching approaches and organisational practices that characterised the early years turned into conformity to the cultural norms of the larger system as external pressures brought Byron ‘in line’ with the expectations of the province and the school Board;
• many staff members left the school for opportunities in less emotionally stressful environments,

• ceremonies and rituals, which had been eliminated or modified in Byron’s early days such as commencements and competitive academic and sports activities, were gradually made to conform to practices in other schools.

In summary, to use David Hargreaves’ (1995) analytical framework described in Chapter Three, Byron began as a combination of ‘hothouse’ and ‘welfarist’ cultures. With the rapid expansion and changes of leadership, Byron took on the claustrophobic, pressured and controlled aspects of a ‘hothouse’ culture. At the same time these pressures promoted the ‘welfarist’ tendency to low social control. By the early 1980s, as a result of declining enrolment and public pressure, Byron would approximate a ‘survivalist’ culture, low social control and low social cohesion. Towards the later part of the 1980s and into the 1990s what appears to have emerged is a ‘traditional’ culture of high social control modified by the school’s ‘welfarist’ history with lower social control than other schools.

Teachers’ lives and teachers’ work

The factors related to teachers’ changing experience of work at Byron and the impact of the school on teachers lives are:

• teachers at Byron worked very hard out of commitment and the exhilaration of the challenge, but in time this exhilaration turned to exhaustion;

• many teachers felt unsupported by senior administration, the school Board, the community and their professional colleagues;
teachers at Byron believed they were working very hard and receiving little credit for their efforts. Indeed, the criticism which most felt was unfair and erroneous led to the ‘intensification’ of their work;

- teachers got older, assumed more familial obligations and the school had to share their energies;

- the most innovative and creative staff were promoted, which left the followers to continue the tradition;

- governments at various levels assumed more and more control of education which reduced areas of teachers’ discretion and creativity;

- many teachers showed symptoms of ‘burnout’ from years of experimentation and innovation and lack of respect for their efforts;

- declining enrolment in the late 1970s created an older staff which was less involved in pupil activities, and less inclined to provide leadership for change.

Many of these factors are ones over which the school had very little, if any control. They were ‘givens’ (Mortimore et al, 1988). There is no question that contextual factors were powerful and pervasive. For schools of the future, the severity of these forces will increase. What is important, therefore, is to learn from this experience of how a school like Lord Byron responded to these forces. By looking at Byron from these six different perspectives in an ecological way, it seems clear that preventing, or at least minimising the ‘attrition of change’ requires attention to a complex interrelationship of many factors which influence purposes, structures, and cultures in schools. Some factors like rapid growth or decline in pupil population may exacerbate pre-existing conditions which result in retrenchment and the ‘attrition of change’, but to suggest that these alone caused Byron’s problems is too simplistic. The complexity of the factors described, and their
connections and relationships, make it virtually impossible to determine exact pathways of causation, and therefore impossible to predict with certainty that attending to this factor or that will ensure a school’s continuing growth and development. The best that can be said is that schools which become aware of and attend to the factors I have listed will be more likely to retain their innovative edge and remain ‘moving’ schools over time.

New settings as a strategy for change

The final question to be addressed in this study is how effective are model schools as catalysts for change in larger systems? Once again, the answer is that it depends on the context. However, this and other studies of new or changing schools can add insights which can help systems take advantage of opportunities to construct new schools so as to promote change in the larger system.

The originators of Byron envisaged the school as a catalyst for change in a newly created school district, the South Board of Education. Like the rest of the province, the 13 high schools in the Board in 1970 were all typically 1960s Ontario schools. There is relatively little in the literature about the effectiveness of ‘lighthouse’ or model schools as a vehicle for change. Those who have commented suggest the strategy has limited utility for promoting change in the larger system. In their study of Lincoln School in Ontario, Hargreaves and his colleagues (1993) suggest that model schools like Lincoln

consciously break the paradigms of existing educational practice. At considerable risk to themselves, their staffs and their students, they create concrete examples of other ways of doing things. This paradigm-breaking function is the most important
one that lighthouse schools perform . . . Schools like Lincoln break the paradigms of practice by creating living images of possibility, practicality and hope (pp. 126-127).

The evidence of Byron’s impact on the South Board supports this ‘paradigm-breaking’ concept. Byron made an immediate impression on the other schools in the system. Within five years of Byron’s opening, all but Roxborough were semastered, and even Roxborough made an attempt to move to semestering in the late 1980s. Even now, as one teacher reported, when a new secondary school is planned it is an “automatic assumption” (Interview, G. L. 1995) that it will be semastered. The fact that this was the only Byron structure of so many which has been adopted almost as it was originally intended raises the question of why? Cuban (1992), in his study of kindergarten’s longevity as a reform, suggests that its ‘ambiguity in purpose’ enabled various interest groups to adopt it for often contradictory reasons. Semestering may fit this category. Byron leaders originally saw it as a way to alter time to allow for more individualised pupil programming. Federations saw it as a way to lighten teaching loads. Pupils saw it as helpful device to concentrate on a few subjects at one time, as well as to accelerate their high school programmes. Principals viewed it as a timetabling device to offer more breadth of programme and utilise staff more efficiently. Regardless of the reason, this timetabling approach remains the most obvious impact of Byron on the system. There were, however, other structures and practices that also travelled to other sites throughout the system, albeit with modifications.

A modified version of Byron’s chairmanship structure was adopted by policy as the headship structure for all the schools in the Board. As a result of this and subsequent
policies, department heads in the South Board continue to play a greater leadership and supervisory role than heads in many other school jurisdictions in Ontario. Department heads in South, for example, perform an important role in teacher appraisal. Byron’s more humane approach to discipline is enshrined in Board and school policies as a result of the work of the system’s discipline committee described previously. Approaches to programming initiated at Byron continue to influence schools in the district. The mastery approach to science and mathematics, which began with the Don Stewart seminars hosted by Lord Byron in the 1970s, operates in other schools, although not at Byron now. The multi-text approach to English now characterises most programmes in the region, and because of Wesley Walters’ provincial role, has impacted the province. The focus on lifetime activities in physical education pioneered in Byron’s early days is a feature of virtually every physical education department in the system. Schools which have been designed after Byron provide flexibility in the use of space, locker bays, air conditioning for year-round use, and centrally located resource centres.

Byron has been more than just a ‘paradigm-breaker’ in South. Over time it has contributed to a more pupil-centred secondary school philosophy in the South system. In its early days the Byron approach was the central topic of the system’s leadership programme which trained many of the system leaders, both at the primary and secondary levels. Through his visits to schools, Sizemore challenged leaders to look at Byron as an alternative. This “challenging of conventional ideas” (Interview, B. F. 1996) would appear to be Byron’s most significant lasting legacy. Moreover, many Byron people themselves moved into leadership roles and became part of the staffs of other schools. As they did so they not only showed the system the possibilities for different organisational patterns, teaching approaches and relationships with pupils, but also worked with other
teachers and managers to make these ‘possibilities’ a reality. It is through these former Byron staff members leaders that the Byron ideals have spread. My respondents spoke of an unwritten obligation, a mission, to carry the Byron message to other places. Just as I had to downplay my Byron roots when I went to Islington, Byron leaders who moved to other schools also tended to work toward the ideals of Byron while keeping their ties to their former school rather quiet. As some of these leaders moved beyond the school level to senior positions with the Board, regional policies began to reflect the philosophy and policies of Byron. The inclusiveness of Byron is reflected in the special education programmes initiated by Graham Clark. The significance of staff development in South as a key to educational change is attributable in large measure to Bill Wilson. Appraisal systems which focused on professional growth were championed by Ward Bond. I have already documented in some detail my own Board-level role. It generally takes time for leaders to move into positions of influence within a school system. In my own case, it took three years from the day I left Byron to have a regional voice, and eight years to be in a position to shape regional policies. This is one of the more important reasons that one must look at a model school over time to determine its influence on the larger system.

In natural or human systems, no part of the larger system is left unaffected by the changes that occur within it. As Wheatley (1993) states,

The openness and creativity that influence a system’s evolution will also affect the evolution of the environment. Self-organising systems do not simply take in information; they change their environment as well. No part of the larger system is left unaffected by changes that occur someplace within it (p. 97).
In some respects, Byron came to look more like other schools because other schools came to look more like Byron. As has been documented previously, and detailed in my own experience at Islington, the Byron ‘mafia’ brought much of the ‘meaning’ of Byron to other schools.

A unique contribution of Byron was to enhance the role of women in the system. In the words of a Byron staff member,

The women’s group at Byron is not focused here but it is all over the county now, because of those women, because of the peer support, and the advice and the information that they received are now principals and vice principals and department heads and directors of education over the province. That came about because of this little nucleus of people who got together to talk about stuff. It was wonderful! wonderful! It certainly changed the face of secondary education in South (Interview, J. C. 1995).

As she explained, before the Byron women’s group, the management of South was “an old-boys network”. By 1995, South was considered one of the leaders in the province in establishing gender equity without an affirmative action policy. In fact, the attitude of many women was to reject such intervention because they felt they were promoted on their merits as opposed to meeting a quota. I suspect this is a manifestation of the original Byron women’s attitude. These women saw a model of leadership at Lord Byron which was consistent with their values, and one in which they felt capable of competing with men. Beginning with the support they enjoyed at Byron, they applied for, and in
increasing numbers were appointed to positions of responsibility in other schools, in the school district, and at very high levels in the province.

What is less obvious is the impact that teachers from Byron have exerted on the other classrooms across the region. A number of respondents said that they felt that it was part of their duty to carry the Byron approach to other settings. As a Byron teacher who continues to have extensive contacts with his former Byron colleagues stated,

we have sprinkled the Byron staff through many schools and I think they take with them the philosophy and innovativeness. I see Leanne Hubbs who is now at Seven Maples and changes have occurred there. They had become a little stagnated for a period of time. Those are the people who still have the philosophy that change is important and we must continue to be innovative and carry out new designs. We can’t just say, well it’s worked well for the past ten years so we’ll just continue on for the next ten years. Those are the things Byron has instilled in people and those people who have left the school carry with them. If you wanted to go up through the system you should go to Byron (Interview, G. L. 1995).

Katherine Ruskin, now a senior manager in South, described how she and a former Byron teacher became colleagues in 1975 at the rather traditional Oakridge High School. Katherine retrospectively felt that this association was a turning point in her own career. As Katherine stated, the association

proved to be one of the most important professional development experiences I’ve ever had. Joan brought with her an attitude of experimentation with a view to the
improvement of instruction that I had never experienced and she revelled in professional discourse as the bread of daily life . . . we would talk about what we had done in class that day, how it had gone, why it hadn't gone better . . . it was my first experience with that type of collaboration with a view to improving teaching (Interview, K. R. 1996).

This led to a joint project to improve teaching at the 'general' level which spread to the rest of the school. In association with two other teachers from other departments they developed an interdisciplinary approach to essay writing and published a document for pupils, *How to Trick Essays into Writing Themselves*, which became widely used not only in the school but in the school system. The influence of a Byron teacher had led to collaboration, experimentation and the first interdisciplinary work the more traditional school had experienced, and according to Katherine influenced the way she operated in her subsequent career moves. Katherine's experience was not unique. In obvious ways like semestering, and in the subtle changes that have taken place in school management and pupil programmes over time, there is considerable evidence of Lord Byron's influence on teachers and teaching in other schools.

As a strategy for change, however, the system and its Director, in the words of a retired secondary principal, "rammed the Byron model down our throats". Sizemore and others (Gold and Miles, 1981; Smith et al. 1987) hoped that other schools would adopt the successful aspects of the innovative school. This 'shock and copy' strategy was typical of the times in Ontario and in South, and created a backlash of distrust, suspicion, anger, entrenchment and jealousy - somewhat muted in Byron's early years but much more apparent as the school began to experience the 'liabilities of newness'. As one
respondent who was a department head in another school in South in the 1970s recalled, "I felt we were doing a heck of a good job. Why is Byron getting all this attention?"

(Interview, M. P. 1996). Remarkably, some of these feelings still exist in the system.

Byron, however, did change the rest of the system, not by shock or blueprint, but by the way it eroded traditional practices elsewhere through spawning influential teachers, leaders and women over time, who slowly changed the system. In effect, Byron changed the system by long term 'attrition'. The creation of new settings, therefore, can provide a venue for policy germination, opportunities for training in innovative practices, avenues for documentation and research, and a seed-bed for the long term development of innovative educational leaders.

Implications

For policy

'Good' schools and 'real' schools

Perhaps the dominant theme in the Lord Byron story is the school's struggle with its image. Throughout, I have suggested that an essential reason for the 'attrition of change' within Byron was the disequilibrium between what the educators considered to be a 'good' school and what influential elements of the parent community and the educational establishment in South considered to be a 'real' school. This gap in perspectives began with the early Innovations Committee and developed through the 1970s as successive principals and staff members attempted to sell the school's innovative concepts to the community. These attempts to persuade were made more difficult by a
lack of scientific support for many of the experimental concepts. As Wesley Walters suggested “we were like paradigm pioneers”. Attempts to convince the community of their philosophy of what constituted a ‘good’ school tended to be based on appeals to the community’s trust in the collective intuition, experience and commitment of the Byron staff, without substantive proof that the new approaches were any better than more traditional patterns. As the 1970s progressed and problems at Byron became obvious, community support for Byron’s image of schooling gradually withered. In the minds of many, Byron was an ‘artsy’ school or a ‘Hall-Dennis school’ or a special education school, it certainly was not a ‘real’ school like Roxborough down-the-road. In effect, the professional image of the Byron staff of what a school should be had diverged significantly from the community’s perception of schooling, and contributed to a ‘disequilibrium’ in perceptions which almost destroyed the school.

Conversely, the perceptions of schooling of the staff and influential community members of Roxborough were quite similar. Ironically, there is significant evidence to suggest that in spite of its very positive reputation (Hargreaves, et al, 1992) Roxborough was a ‘cruising’ school (Stoll and Fink, 1996) that was resting on its laurels. Cruising schools may appear to be effective in terms of academic results but they have often developed little capacity for change and growth over time. A study which was replicated in South, to which I was privy in my role as a senior administrator, showed that over 30 per cent of the pupils at Roxborough were not involved in the life of the school (King, 1986). While the school had high achievement, and excellence in many areas, the involved students were always the same pupils. In other words the football players, the choir members, and the theatre performers were essentially drawn from the middle class students. The school, however, was and is well supported by its community because the influential
parents tend to be the ones whose students benefit from a school like Roxborough. This pattern of the 'middle class' defining the change agenda for a school is not unique (Brouilette, 1996; Oakes et al, 1997). If Roxborough is typical, a school in which the staff's and the community's conceptions of a 'good' school are very similar may not necessarily benefit all the pupils. The policy challenge, therefore, is to determine the appropriate degree of disequilibrium to ensure that a school continues to be 'moving' (Rosenholtz, 1989) in terms of achievement for all pupils, while preventing the debilitating type of image problem faced by Byron on the one hand, and the complacency of a Roxborough on the other. The clear message is that the professional's concept of a 'good' school must remain connected to, but not necessarily dependent on or a duplicate of the community's concept of schooling. The professional staff must, however, provide leadership which is sensitive to the community's aims and aspirations for its young people. Contemporary evidence in South suggests that parents recognise the need for change, innovation and experimentation, and are prepared to accept the professionals' leadership, but they expect changes to be based on more than just teachers' and managers' intuition and experience (South Board - Effective Schools Parent Study, 1993). Parents also expect professionals to explain the changes in language they can understand and justify the changes based on valid research.

The relationships of Byron and similar schools to their communities contain another interesting paradox. Most of these schools were more open to their communities than other contemporary schools, but their very openness led to widespread and often unfair criticism (Fullan et al, 1972; Gold and Miles, 1981; Fletcher et al, 1985). Stable schools like Roxborough, however, which let parents know only what the school wanted them to
know, seldom faced concerted criticism. This apparent contradiction suggests a number of questions.

- How open should a school be to its community?
- At what point do the public’s democratic rights intrude upon the professional responsibilities of principals and teachers?
- Can innovation and public openness coexist in schools?

Generally, the change literature advocates openness with school communities (Fullan, 1991; Stoll and Fink, 1996; Hargreaves, 1997). Indeed, Ainley (1993) suggests that involvement of the public at early stages of a change encourages community assistance, support and understanding. One would certainly be hard pressed to argue against this principle of community involvement in a change process on ethical grounds. The Byron case, however, suggests that community involvement in planning would probably have severely circumscribed the nature of the changes. This would seem to be particularly true when educators make up an influential part of the school’s community (Gold and Miles, 1981).

Innovation and change tend to take place on the frontiers of what is considered acceptable. As Kuhn (1970) has stated:

The man who embraces a new paradigm at an early stage must often do so in defiance of the evidence provided by the problem solving. He must . . . have faith that the new paradigm will succeed with the many large problems that confront it knowing only that the older paradigm has failed with a few. A decision of that kind can only be made on faith (pp. 157-158).
Byron was more than a bounded change such as destreaming a grade level or developing an interdisciplinary curriculum. It was an attempt to change the prevailing educational paradigm quite dramatically. Bond and his ‘critical mass’ of colleagues were paradigm pioneers. Pioneering, however, requires risk-taking. The pioneer must often act without a clear roadmap of the future. As Barker (1989) suggests, pioneering is more an act of the heart than an act of the head. It would seem from the experiences of Byron and many of the schools described in Chapter One that both the educational and larger communities are generally unwilling or unable to accept pioneering which requires significant departures from the prevailing paradigm of schooling. Perhaps this is the reason that Sarason (1990) entitled his book *The Predictable Failure of Educational Reform*. In a sense, therefore, the politics of learning between school and community are in large measure determined by public opinion, which in educational matters tends to be inherently conservative. For change agents, however, the learning of politics is a necessity. They need to know how much and in what capacity various stakeholders should be involved in change processes. Perhaps there is a sliding scale of how open to be when pursuing change. Perhaps the desirable degree of public involvement depends on the radicalness of the changes - the more radical the change the less open the initiators may have to be. At this point, however, future research will have to settle the issue. The challenge for practice and research is to find the optimum balance between the ‘politics of learning’ and the ‘learning of politics’ in different kinds of change situations.

*The ‘attrition of change’: its dual meaning*

This study, along with the cases reviewed in Chapter One, suggest that the hopes and dreams of the initiators of ‘lighthouse’ schools will prove disappointing in the long run.
There does indeed appear to be a life cycle to new and innovative schools. With careful planning, a reasonably stable context, and a little good fortune, however, the stages of the ‘attrition of change’ might be delayed by avoiding ‘overreaching and entropy’. Simply stated, new schools such as Byron will, over time, look and sound like the other schools in the system. This view that ‘attrition of change’ for new and innovative schools is probable, if not predictable, is somewhat pessimistic. Looked at another way, however, the strategy of ‘model’ schools can be considered a positive influence for change over time in the larger system. In many ways, the schools in South came to look and sound like Byron. One can see this growing influence in the pupil-centredness of all schools, the pervasiveness of semestering, the strength of women’s leadership in South, and the general acceptance by teachers in South of the importance of professional development and reflective practice. The system’s acceptance of change as an integral part of practice has been well documented (Stoll and Fink, 1992; 1994; 1996). Over its 25 years, Lord Byron has contributed significantly to the gradual ‘attrition’ of barriers to change in the South Board - thus the second meaning of the ‘attrition of change’.

The Byron study indicates that the use of this ‘germination’ strategy needs to be handled with discretion by avoiding overselling the innovations and by reducing the rhetoric of change. How well this strategy travels to different contexts requires further research. An examination of the impact of a school such as Countesthorpe on its Local Educational Authority and British secondary education in general would provide an interesting parallel to the present study and help to confirm or challenge some of the patterns identified in the Lord Byron study. Similarly, longitudinal ethnographic investigations of the American ‘break-the-mold’ schools would also contribute useful information on the ‘life cycle’ and ‘change model’ theories proposed here.
Leadership at various levels played an important part in this, and other similar studies of new and innovative schools (Smith et al., 1987). At the system level Byron experienced unique benefits and suffered undue criticism because of the initiating C.E.O.'s enthusiasm for its innovations. In addition, the choice of an outstanding, charismatic leader for the school's first principal made his replacement very difficult. Loyalty to the person as opposed to the concept was a particular problem in both the Byron study and Smith and his colleagues' research (1987). These circumstances raise a number of questions of policy and practice. What type of person should be chosen as the first leader of a new and innovative school? What commitments should the formal school leaders make to ensure some stability in the first few years? Certainly Bond's early departure was a turning point. The question of succession planning which was a problem in the Byron case and which is barely mentioned in the research literature, raises the issue of how system officials or school governors ensure some degree of continuity after the departure of the initiating leader(s).

A related policy problem results from the complex macro and micro-political issues which confront school management teams. Few leaders in Ontario have been trained to handle the 'politics of learning' such as direct interference in the school's functioning by politicians and aggressive parents, or the challenge of dealing with competing and conflicting interest groups such as parents who want to include special education pupils in classes, and other parents who want their children separated from less successful pupils. The ability to resolve or at least contain such political problems often determines school
leaders' success and their schools' ability to function effectively. Few jurisdictions, at least in North America at any rate, provide training in the area. This leaves potentially capable leaders and their schools vulnerable to pressures from vocal and organised minorities.

The Byron case also raises the issue of the continuing relevance of a layer of department and/or year heads in secondary schools. There is evidence that this leadership structure contributes to balkanization and internal school rivalries (Siskin, 1994). Even at Byron, which tried to create a different leadership configuration, the chairmen's structure eventually evolved into an organisational layer which confused decision-making and detracted from a school-wide focus.

In addition to the role of department or year heads, a school such as Byron also raises staffing questions related to recruitment, induction, the composition of a faculty, and differentiated staffing. The most important appraisal of a teacher often occurs the day he or she is hired. It is very difficult, at least in Ontario, to remove a teacher once that teacher has received a contract. Bond spent a great deal of time ensuring he assembled the people needed to achieve the kind of school he envisaged. Subsequently, rapid growth meant that hiring became rather frenetic and induction programmes became increasingly haphazard. Equally problematic were the procedures in place to respond to the surplus teachers produced by the declining enrolment which followed. Teacher contracts in Ontario usually specify that the last person hired is the first person declared surplus to a school. From an individual point of view this would appear to be the fairest solution to a difficult problem. This results, however, in school staffs in which career stages, gender and expertise of the teaching staff can often become quite unbalanced.
Byron, for example, has in 25 years, gone from a very young staff to one of the oldest in the region. Certainly in South, procedures to facilitate transfers at the secondary level to other schools might have some merit.

An associated policy issue relates to the differentiation of staff. Byron demonstrated the advantages of alternative staffing patterns, but the unions in Ontario are understandably opposed to the hiring of para-professionals, unless they are added on to existing teaching staff. Some politicians in Ontario have advocated alternative staffing as a way to save money by hiring people who would be paid less than teachers. This pattern has been used in hospitals in Ontario to reduce the number of nurses and replace them with lower paid nurses’ assistants. If, as in the Byron situation, differentiation is used to assist the teaching-learning process it can be a useful innovation. Conversely, differentiation as a teacher-cutting exercise will probably result in such resentment from teachers that few benefits will accrue to pupils. Lord Byron has demonstrated that alternative ways to look at the staffing of schools are possible, and may even be desirable if they are used to improve teaching and learning, and not as a cynical governmental exercise in cost-cutting.

_The role of the system_

Smith and his colleagues (1987) have described how Kensington school existed within a ‘nested system’. Throughout this study I have connected Lord Byron to the South system, and in turn to the province of Ontario. There is an increasing effort in Canada and other countries to allow market forces to determine educational polices (Barlow and Robertson, 1994; Gerwitz et al, 1995; Robertson, 1996). Governments, through various policy initiatives like direct funding to schools, changes in taxing responsibilities, and
direct and overt restructuring of school districts, have often limited the role of the local educational authorities. Such intermediary levels of governance are usually viewed as impediments to governments’ change agendas. School districts are depicted as unnecessarily bureaucratic and inefficient. While there are no doubt districts which fit this description, the Lord Byron story suggests an alternative picture which indicates that school districts (L.E.A.s) can and do play an important role in trying to ensure a quality education for all children, not just those of the influential middle class. The South Board and Jim Sizemore created the opportunity for the creation of Lord Byron which attempted to respond to the needs of all pupils. Throughout the difficult times, the Board through its administrative support, ensured the continuing viability of Lord Byron. The selection of principals in the mid-1980s, the addition of regional programmes, and the efforts to balance enrolments between Roxborough and Byron are examples of the system’s intervention to protect the quality of programmes for all pupils. In a pure market approach, Roxborough would have accepted the most academically suitable pupils which would have left Byron as a repository for lower socio-economic, non-academic and special education pupils (Whitty, 1997). As a result of the Board’s intervention, however, Byron maintained a comprehensive pupil population that enabled it to offer a breadth of programmes to meet a wide variety of pupil needs. While the market might promote quality for some schools, (although even this is doubtful (Stoll and Fink, forthcoming)), the Lord Byron experience suggests that governments need to reassess the role of the district in maintaining equitable education for all pupils. In their rush to eliminate the intrusive effects of local government bureaucracy, national and regional governments may also end up removing invaluable forms of co-ordination and support.
The ideal research model to follow for a longitudinal study of the nature of the Byron investigation would have been close to that of Smith and his colleagues (1987) in their research on the evolution of Kensington School. They were involved as participant observers in the origination of the school and were able to revisit the school periodically over its first 25 years. While they might be considered external investigators, their continuing contacts gave them a familiarity which made their involvement quite comfortable for the school’s staff. In the present case, this option was clearly impossible. I suspect that the paucity of longitudinal studies of this nature results from researchers’ inability to expend the time, or maintain the perseverance to continue such a project over a considerable period of time. The research strategies described in Chapter Two were developed in large measure to attempt to emulate this ideal within the constraints of a retrospective study. Yet this pragmatic adjustment has also yielded significant methodological strengths. The decision to interview cadres of participants from three different eras enabled me to understand Byron’s shifting external contexts and their impact upon the school’s internal culture and structures. It is my conviction that this approach has the potential to help researchers probe even more deeply into the interplay between change and continuity in schools. As indicated in Chapter One, only a few studies of innovative schools examine change over time (Smith et al, 1987) or look at change from the perspective of the people who usually have to implement educational change - the teachers (Woods, 1979; Ball, 1981). The combination of historical, ethnographic and life history research strategies employed in the Byron study enables the researcher to develop a picture of educational change as it is experienced by the participants over time. It is a methodology which can travel to different contexts and in
the process unite social histories and social geographies. For example, an historical
ethnographic study of a school such as Countesthorpe College in England or Thornlea in
Ontario would enable the researcher to support or modify theories developed in the
present study. A comparative study of Byron’s neighbour Roxborough, or an
investigation of a number of schools of different types, sizes and philosophies using the
methodology employed in this study would yield important insights into the forces of
both change and continuity on a wider scale.

The decision to combine the three research traditions, - the historical, ethnographic and
life history approaches - not only provides a comprehensive picture of the school, but
also a means to triangulate the data. For example, the interviews were a useful way to
bring to life and in some cases clarify or contradict, the available historical documents.
Moreover, it was one thing for people to ascribe ‘burnout’ to colleagues but it was quite
another to hear interview respondents describe their own reactions to pressures created
by the changing contexts of Lord Byron. The use of a structured interview with cadres of
people from three different decades of Byron’s history not only allowed me to understand
the shifting circumstances of the school, but also provided a further cross-check on
peoples’ veracity. Combining an unstructured component with this structured interview
enabled respondents to lead me into areas that I had not contemplated. More
significantly, this aspect provided my interview subjects with the opportunity to
personalise events which helped me to understand the various layers of meaning in the
school. The focus groups were also a source of considerable insight. Participants
seemed to open areas of discussion for each other. One comment triggered another
person’s reminiscences and yet another participant’s reactions.
My inside/outside roles, which were detailed in Chapter Two, had many advantages. Perhaps the greatest advantage of the ‘insiders’ aspect was as a credibility check. It would be difficult for someone to stray too far from the truth knowing my connections with the school. I was also able for a large part of the period of study “to stand back” from the school and “try to see it as much as possible as an ‘outsider’” (Lawton, 1989, p. 18). My unique situation did, of course, have disadvantages. In retrospect, a totally outside observer might have been more successful in developing the life history component. I arrived at this conclusion when people who in my judgement had experienced burnout, ascribed the problem to others but not to themselves. I suspect it is too difficult to admit to a former colleague and in some cases a friend, that one was experiencing such distress. This seemed particularly true of middle aged males who would find it difficult to admit to weakness. Perhaps the greatest problem of my ‘insider’s’ perspective lies with the veracity of my own perceptions of events. It is for this reason that my role in the school has been outlined in such detail in this work. On balance however, this unique relationship to the school and its staff proved to be quite advantageous.

As I suggested in the introduction to this thesis, I am in what Handy (1995a) has called my ‘Third Age’. In increasing numbers, former school and system managers like me are opting for early retirement. Many possess rich insights into the macro policies and practices of schools and systems. Some have the potential to combine their extensive practical experience and their newly found time to carry on significant intellectual activity. The present study is an example of this conjunction. Studies of this type, however, are quite unlike other forms of practitioner research. They are not ‘action’ research because they do not focus on the investigator’s personal actions - nor are they exclusively life
histories, or studies undertaken by ‘outsiders’ to a setting. Rather, if successful, they are thoughtful historical ethnographies about the schools and systems in which the researcher has played a part. While teacher research practitioners can provide rich understandings of the micro levels of schools and systems, they are often unknowing of the larger ‘nested systems’ (Smith et al, 1987). Educators with an extensive management background can, therefore, contribute insights into the complex interconnections and interrelationships among the various levels of schools and systems which others may not see or understand.

As a senior administrator and as this study illustrates, I dealt on a daily basis with the relationships among linked settings – the province, the district, the schools and the community among others. Practitioner research of the nature of the present study, therefore, has the potential to provide unique insights into the linkages between and among these macro and micro settings and open significant new directions in our understanding of educational policies, practices, and the processes of change (Hargreaves, 1985).

Perhaps the greatest problem with my retrospective approach is the difficulty of collecting information from a representative sample of former parents and pupils of the school. Since people tend to behave based on their perceptions of reality (Purkey and Novak, 1984), for the purposes of this study, I considered the perceived views of the pupils and parents as seen through the eyes of the teaching staff as more important in explaining the changing nature of Lord Byron over time. Like many of the strategies described, this too was a compromise from the ideal, but one which at least helped me to understand the community’s impact on the school and its role in the ‘attrition of change’.
Finally, the conceptual framework which was introduced in Chapter Three provides an approach which ensures that issues, problems, or in this case a school, are looked at through multiple lenses or frames. By collecting and analysing data in this manner, the researcher is obliged to see the complexity and interconnectedness of issues. This multidimensional look at Lord Byron over its history precludes simple explanations and trite prescriptions. It also provides a framework which might help schools to analyse their own change processes and develop problem solving strategies and their capacity for change over time.

Conclusion

The literature on change has grown significantly in recent years. Most of it, however, attends to strategies to change ineffective, or in Rosenholtz' (1989) term 'stuck' schools into effective or 'moving' schools. Such organisations are characterised as learning organisations which can respond to the vicissitude of a rapidly changing context (Garrett, 1987; Senge, 1990; Stacey, 1993). Very little, however, has been written on how innovative or 'moving' schools can maintain their momentum in the face of an increasingly complex, diverse, unpredictable and often unforgiving world. While this report does not address this issue directly, it has shown how one school struggled to maintain its essential meaning, while confronted by forces over which it had little or no control. In the process, this study provides a number of possible 'warning lights', which, depending on a school's context, may help 'moving' schools to stay the course and school systems to use the opportunity to construct new schools as a vehicle for bringing about long term innovation and change across the system.
The stories of new and innovative schools told in Chapter One have the stuff of classic tragedy - heroic leaders laid low by often unfair criticism, exciting visions of new educational worlds blinded by people's timidity and fears, and promising organisations and institutions destroyed or significantly diminished by internal and external discord.

Lord Byron has many of these qualities - a gradual 'attrition' of its innovative ethos after the departure of its revered leader, aggressive opposition from the people it was trying to serve, and internal divisions and conflicts precipitated by forces over which the school had little control. Unlike the other stories, however, this study views the school over a 25 year period, and also focuses on the school's relationship to its district context.

Looked at from this perspective, we have a more romantic picture of a school with a powerful vision of educational change, which produced a generation of leaders who carried the school's message to more traditional settings, and used their Byron experience to initiate processes to speed the attrition of barriers to change in these other settings.

While the internal manifestations of the Byron experiment have eroded over time, the power of its essential meaning can be seen in every secondary school in the South Board of Education, as each day they attempt to respond to the diverse needs and interests of all their pupils.
References


Bracey, G.W. (1991) ‘Why can’t they be like we were?’, Phi Delta Kappan, 73 (2), 104-120.


470


473


Historical Sources

The following historical sources were examined to reconstruct the history of the South Board and Lord Byron High School within their Ontario context.

South sources

The South Board of Education has archived all the materials which have been presented to the school Board for its fortnightly meeting. These documents cover the time frame of this thesis, 1969-1995 include the following:

- minutes of all Board meetings,
- reports to the Board,
- budget submissions,
- long and short range plans,
- Summaries of government legislation and program changes,
- Ministry memoranda,
- letters to the Board system personnel reports,
- building plans,
- descriptions of innovative programmes.

The following regional documents were cited in the text:

Ontario Schools: Intermediate and Senior Divisions (O.S: I.S.),
South Board Residence and Business Assessment Data, 1993,
Lord Byron sources

Lord Byron High School has archived materials from 1970 to 1978. After that date documentary resources are missing. The following documents exist for the first eight years of the school:

- school aims and objectives,
- school accomplishments,
- evaluation reports in 1970-71 and 1975
- plans, objectives and accomplishments of individual departments.

The following specific sources were cited in the text:

Report of Lord Byron Evaluation Committee, 1975,
Terms of Reference: Evaluation for the Study of Lord Byron High School, 1974,
External Evaluation Committee Report, 1975,
Lord Byron Aims and Objectives, 1970-71
Manager’s Letter, G. Clark, October 30,1978
Letter J.M to Graham Clark
Lord Byron Aims and Objectives, 1975-76,

Lord Byron Evaluation Report, 1971-72
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## Interview Schedule

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### Explanation of Headings
- **NAME**: respondents initials
- **EXP.**: experience in education at the time of the interview
- **LAST POS.**: most recent educational position held by respondent
- **PTN. AT L.B.**: position(s) held at Lord Byron
- **PREXP.**: experience in education before joining Lord Byron
- **ARRIVAL**: reason for joining the Lord Byron staff
- **DEPARTURE**: reason for leaving Lord Byron staff
- **YEARS@L.B.**: the years in which the respondent was a Lord Byron staff member
- **G.**: gender of respondent: M - Male; F - Female
- **N.A.**: not applicable
- *****: respondent was interviewed more than once
Appendix 2: Interview Questions

Respondents’ Profile

Name of respondent
Experience in education
Present position
Position(s) at Lord Byron
Years at Byron (from? to ?)
Number of schools taught or administered in besides Lord Byron
Number of years experience before Lord Byron
Reasons for joining Lord Byron
Reasons for leaving Lord Byron (if appropriate)

Structured interview

Change

What do you feel has made Byron unique among schools in South and the province?
What do you consider to be Byron’s philosophy?
How does Byron respond to change? Has this way of responding changed over time?

Leadership

In your experience at Byron, what were the sources of leadership, principal(s), heads, or chairmen, staff?
Have you seen shifts in the locus and style of leadership? If you have seen changes how do you account for them?

**Contexts**

How has the South system and the province affected the direction of Byron? To what extent has the community shaped Byron’s directions?

To what extent has Byron shaped its own directions and to what extent has it been shaped by external social forces?

**Culture**

What are some of the staff and/or student rituals or ceremonies that you believe reveal the Byron culture?

Does Byron have any heroes or heroines among its present or past staff?

Tell me a story that you believe typifies Byron as a school?

**Work**

In what ways was or is the work load at Byron different from other schools?

Have you noticed any changes in the intensity, and the kinds of work you have been doing over the years?

To what do you attribute the changing nature of your work?

**Lives**
Has working at Byron impacted on your personal life? If so, in what ways? How do you account for this impact?

Do you feel a school such as Byron puts inordinate stress on personal relationships? If so why? Do you feel these pressures are or were more or less than other schools?

How do you account for the inordinate number of changed relationships among Byron staff in the first few years of the school?

Generic question

This study is about changes in new and innovative schools over time, add your observations on the topic based on your experience at Byron.