The impact of managers' characteristics on the use of public relations strategy: An exploratory study in Queensland schools.

by

Elizabeth Letitia Macpherson

GradCertBus (IMC), BBus (Communication), DipT (Prim) QUT

School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations

Faculty of Business

Queensland University of Technology

Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

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Abstract

While previous positive and normative studies have focused on the role public relations should play in organisations and the need for management in all organisations to attend to public relations (Cutlip et al., 2006), there has been little discussion in the public relations literature on why or how managers choose to enact public relations strategies for their organisations. If the discipline of public relations is to cement itself as a management function, then researchers must gain a better understanding of managers themselves given that they are the ones who decide if and how public relations strategies should be employed in the organisation. This study has sought to explore evidence of a relationship between management characteristics and their impact on decisions managers make when choosing which public relations strategies to adopt in response to changes in the organisation's operating environment.

This exploratory research study has been conducted within a specific context of schools in Queensland, Australia. Queensland schools have been facing a number of changes within their operating environment due to changes in Federal funding models in Australia's education system. This study used an exploratory, qualitative approach to understand the management characteristics demonstrated by managers in schools and how these have impacted on the selection of public relations strategies for responding to their changing and increasingly competitive environment. The unit of analysis for this research study was principals in State (government) schools and in non-government schools. Ten principals were interviewed from four different types of schools in Queensland – the more traditional, elite, private schools (GPS Schools); other Independent Schools; Catholic Schools; and State (or public) schools. These interviews were analysed for quantitative comparisons of the managers' characteristics across the different schools (in terms of the number of principals in each age bracket, those holding postgraduate qualifications, years of experience etc.); and for qualitative data to provide a greater sense of their understanding of public relations.

The 10 schools were selected within a geographic area from Brisbane's inner city to its outer western suburbs to include an element of competition amongst those managers being interviewed. A detailed review of government, school and other public documents was also conducted to gain an insight into the environment in which principals made decisions about public relations strategy to respond to increasing competition.

This study found support for the literature on the relationship between management characteristics and strategy. However, there was also variation in findings warranting further investigation of the literature on the relationship between management characteristics and strategy in a school setting. Key relationships found in this study were between: management characteristics themselves; age and the use of public relations strategies; and gender and the use of public relations strategies. There was also evidence of support for the literature linking the impact that the combination of managers' age, education and experience had on the use of public relations strategies.

While this study was exploratory in nature, it did reveal a number of areas that require further investigation to gain a deeper understanding of how and why managers choose public relations strategies as a response to changes in their operating environment. It also provided a different framework to gain a better understanding of managers' understanding and support of public relations in schools, which, in conjunction with an analysis of their management characteristics, will hopefully allow public relations scholars and practitioners alike gain an understanding of how and why managers use public relations strategies.

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Abbreviations

AH	Acting Headmaster
AIC	Associated Independent Colleges
AISQ	Association of Independent Schools Queensland
ALP	Australian Labor Party
APC	Australian Parents Council
BAA	Backing Australia's Ability
BCE	Brisbane Catholic Education
BISTMT	Boosting Innovation, Science, Technology and Mathematics Teaching
BSHS	Brisbane State High School
C & P	Communication and Promotion
DH	Deputy Headmaster
DOGS	Australian Council for the Defence of Government Schools
EBA	Enrolment Benchmark Adjustment
ERI	Education Resources Index
FCSC	Federal Catholic Schools' Committee
GPS	Great Public Schools Association of Queensland Inc.
GST	Goods and Services Tax
I & R	Image and Reputation
ICT	Information and Computer Technology
ISCA	Independent Schools Council of Australia
ISQ	Independent Schools Queensland
NCEC	National Catholic Education Commission
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PG	Postgraduate
PRSA	Public Relations Society of America
QCEC	Queensland Catholic Education Commission
QERC	Quality of Education Review Committee
QGSSSA	Queensland Girls' Secondary Schools Sports Association
QSE	Queensland State Education-2010
QUT	Queensland University of Technology
ROI	Return on Investment

RB	Relationship Building
SES	Socio Economic Status
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TAS	The Associated Schools
Terrace	St Joseph's College
UG	Undergraduate

Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signed: …….

Date: …../……/……

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I lost my father three years into this thesis and have watched my mother fight cancer, not once, but twice. When I lost dad, this thesis became all about finishing (for him) and I did this against all odds through the inspiration I drew from my mum who fought back with the strength (and love) I have seen drive her throughout my life.

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This work is dedicated with love to my father,

Neville Clarence Simons,

who together with my mother, Barbara Rose Simons, taught me:

'I can do all things through Him who strengthens me'.
Phillipians 4:13.

CHAPTER ONE
Introduction to the Research

Changes in Federal Government funding in the early 1970s in Australia sparked a series of changes in the environment public and private schools would operate in due to the rise of a 'new breed' of (independent) schools across Australia as a result of this funding. In one Australian state, Queensland, such changes saw newer independent schools cropping up in the outer suburbs of city centres, providing new competition to their older, traditional private counterparts, and also for state schools in Queensland. Some schools in Queensland have adapted to increased competition in this market and the changing social environment, while others have failed to adapt with some of the more established, traditional, and expensive private schools also losing market share. While some of these traditional private schools held their ground through reputation, others, particularly those in the outer suburbs of Brisbane, have lost enrolments to their newer counterparts, despite a similarity in fees and educational offerings (Independent Schools Council of Australia [ISCA], 2007b).

This raises questions about how principals as managers in schools, have sought to respond to a rapidly changing environment and the resulting competition brought about by more affordable private education. One practice area that contributes to understanding how organisations adapt to changes in their operating environment is public relations (Grunig, 1992). Public relations literature suggests that public relations is a management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and those publics on which its success or failure depends (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2006).

This suggests that using public relations strategies can be an important way for organisations to build and manage relationships that can help them deal with change. However, there is little literature that illuminates why managers of organisations choose to use public relations. This thesis considers the role managers (principals) play in the selection of public relations strategies in Queensland schools and how managers' characteristics impact on the use of public relations strategy.

This contributes understanding to claims made in the public relations literature that public relations can assist organisations to achieve their organisational goals in a constantly changing environment.

Hambrick and Mason (1984) suggest that managers' characteristics are determinants of the choice of strategies used in the organisation. One of those sets of strategies would include public relations. Therefore, to address the gap in the public relations literature about why public relations is used, this thesis will specifically look at the characteristics of managers (in this case principals) and the public relations strategies they adopt. An insight into their level of understanding and of the decisions/choices they have made, will be gained from analysing their characteristics and what impact these may have on the choice of public relations strategies they have adopted.

1.1 Purpose of Study

In the context of exploring the role managers (principals) play in the selection of public relations strategies in Queensland schools, this study is based on four objectives:

1. Explore the management characteristics of managers (principals) in a range of government, independent and Catholic schools.
2. Examine managers' (principals') understanding of public relations and the role it plays in organisations.
3. Explore the ways managers (principals) have used public relations as a strategy to respond to the increased competition brought about by their changing environment.
4. Gain an insight into the relationships between managers' characteristics and the role of public relations strategy within an organisation.

1.2 Research Problem

Formally, the research problem to be investigated is:

> *How are management characteristics of principals related to the understanding and use of public relations strategies adopted in schools?*

A number of guiding research questions have also been developed in order to address this overriding question.

RQ i): What management characteristics do principals demonstrate in schools?

RQ ii): What understanding do principals have of public relations?

RQ iii): What public relations strategies do principals use?

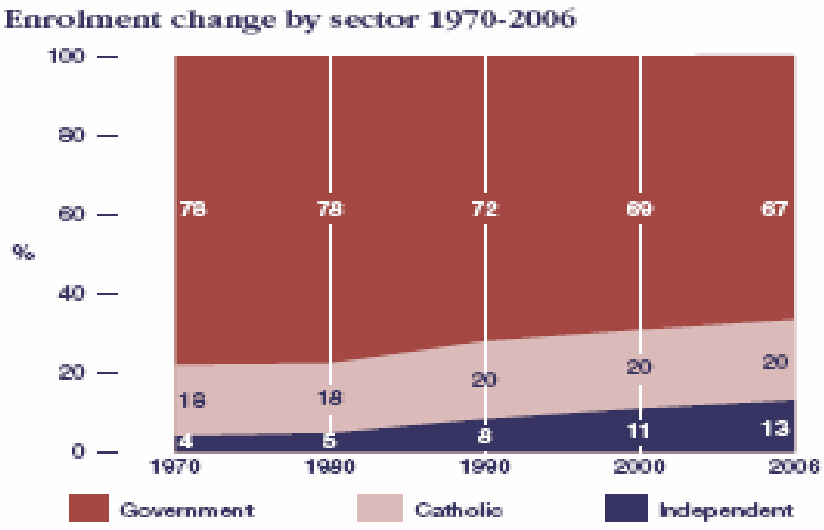
1.3 Background

In the early 1970s, the Whitlam government's recurrent funding models triggered a major shift in Australian education with bipartisan political support and a new social acceptance of Commonwealth funding of nongovernment (private) schools. The new funding arrangements were designed to provide greater choice for all Australians by facilitating the introduction of low fee paying schools to ensure the average person could afford the choice of sending their children to a private school. By the early-1980s, this model spawned the growth of a new breed of non-government or independent schools in Australia. This growth started taking full effect by the mid-1980s when new independent schools began opening especially in the growth areas in the outer suburbs of large cities. In Queensland, these new independent schools also took on new forms combining primary and secondary education as compared with the traditional single-sex, private schools which predominantly had offered only secondary education. Many of these new independent schools became known as P-12 schools with an additional preparatory (Prep) year (which had rarely been seen before in Queensland). The other major difference of the newer offerings was that they were co-educational schools as compared to the traditional private schools which were primarily single-sex only.

Such changes provided greater competition to the more traditional private schools with many losing market share and the long waiting lists they had built up over many years as parents looked for cheaper alternatives. The new configuration of

independent schools also saw children moving to independent schools much earlier than the traditional shift to secondary (high) school in Year 8 (ISCA, 2007b). This shift in parent choices led to more traditional private schools also following their lead by adding primary year levels and a Prep year onto their offerings to parents with some also offering coeducation in their primary years.

Since the emergence of this "new breed" of independent schools in the mid-1980s, the independent sector has almost tripled its market share from 5% in 1980 to 13% in 2006 (see Figure 1). Parents had a greater choice and were exercising that choice. With increased choice, came increased parental expectations (Independent Schools Queensland, 2006) and increased competition not only within the independent sector itself but also within the State and Catholic sectors. As Figure 1 illustrates, while the Catholic sector has held its ground since the early-1970s, state (government) schools have been forced to compete for market share as they have continued to lose enrolments to the independent sector from as early as the preparatory year and other key entry points throughout the primary years, as well as the traditional changeover point of Year 8.



Source: ISCA, 2007b.

Figure 1. Enrolment change by sector 1970 - 2006

This has meant that schools – both state and private – are facing the challenge of operating in a highly competitive market with ongoing rapid change in their broader political, social, legal and technological environments.

While the onset of recurrent funding in education saw newer, more affordable entrants to the nongovernment market thrive, the increase in the resulting competition has also led to the demise of some schools, particularly government schools. This setting provides an opportune, changing environment in which to investigate an underlying principle of public relations that it helps organisations adapt and adjust to changing conditions. Specifically, this study will explore principals' use of public relations strategies within such an environment.

1.4 Research Contribution

This exploratory research study is designed to extend the literature in public relations by exploring managers' characteristics and how these impact on how managers choose public relations strategies. To date, while there is a call that public relations is a management function, there is little literature about how and why organisational managers use public relations. This study seeks to address this gap. This is done within a specific context of schools in Queensland, Australia. In this context, it will also be important to understand principals' understanding of what public relations is. This thesis will focus on how public relations as a management function identifies, establishes and maintains relationships with key stakeholders or publics. The core focus of public relations strategies which separates it from other functions within the organisation is its focus on relationships. An understanding of how principals define public relations and its role in organisations will be useful in understanding what role principals see it can play in schools. This can shed insights into understanding how public relations practices are used to respond to the variety of changes in the environment within the education sector. It will also be interesting to compare principals' definition and understanding of public relations to the definition provided in the public relations literature.

1.5 Practical Contribution

At a practical level, this study has implications for decision makers (principals) within schools in terms of building an understanding of the role public relations can play in strategically communicating with key stakeholders and how they manage relationships between the organisation and these groups in their social and competitive environment. Examining how public relations is viewed by managers in organisations such as schools also provides public relations practitioners with a useful point of reference in their choice (and explanation) of strategic options available to organisations within a changing population for adapting to increased competition or other changes in the environment the organisation operates within.

1.6 Methodology

This study uses an exploratory, qualitative approach to understand the management characteristics demonstrated by managers in schools and how these impact on the selection of public relations strategies for responding to their changing environment. Ten principals were interviewed from four different types of schools in Queensland – the more traditional, elite, private schools (GPS Schools); other Independent schools, Catholic schools and state (or public) schools. Managers from three different GPS schools were interviewed including headmasters from two GPS boys' schools and one principal from a QGSSSA (girls' equivalent to GPS) girls' school. Two principals from both Catholic and other Independent schools were interviewed due to the similarities of the characteristics of these schools to others within their system. The 10 schools were selected within a geographic area from Brisbane's inner city to its outer western suburbs to include the element of competition amongst those managers being interviewed (see the Appendix for the Interview Proforma with further details on sampling, methodology and data collection outlined in Chapter Three).

1.7 Definitions

To ensure a greater understanding of the research problem and questions, definitions of terminology used in this study are presented here.

Public Relations Strategies

In public relations, the definition of the term, *strategy*, refers to the overall approach adopted to respond to changes in an organisation's operating environment. While this term is normally an overriding term to the activities adopted within an organisation, for the purposes of this study, strategy will cover any approach made to respond to increased competition within the schools under investigation either at a strategic or tactical level.

Management Characteristics

Management characteristics is a term used in organisational literature with much of the literature focusing on the work of Hambrick and Mason (1984) who identify a number of demographic and psychographic management characteristics. While these are detailed in a review of the literature in Chapter Two, the term management characteristics in this study, will focus on managers' demographic characteristics, in particular age, education, experience and tenure.

Principals

Managers in Queensland schools hold the title of *Headmaster* or *Principal*. Headmaster is a more traditional title held mainly in boys' schools and predominantly in the more traditional, elite, boys' schools. However, for consistency, in this thesis the term principal will be used since most managers in Queensland schools hold this title.

Private or Independent Schools

Schools at which parents pay fees are often referred to as *private schools* as a way of distinguishing them from public or state schools, which do not charge fees. *Independent* and *Catholic* are more accurate terms, as the schools in the nongovernment sector are far from private: These schools are accessible to a wide range of families, must comply with an array of Australian and Queensland Government legislation and meet governance, financial and auditing standards, as well as other requirements of corporate and common law. They are not private: They are autonomous in that they are largely self-governing, and take responsibility for their own operations, programs and affairs (Hunter, 2008, p. 4).

1.8 Limitations

This study is focused on one specific industry – education, or more specifically Queensland schools. The findings are therefore limited to the unique characteristics of schools as opposed to other government, commercial, service or not-for-profit organisations. Further, while schools are experiencing increased competition both within Australia and other countries, this study focuses only on Queensland schools which may share different characteristics to schools in other states throughout Australia and certainly, international schools.

The unit of analysis for this research study is principals in state (government) schools and in nongovernment schools. For the purposes of this study, nongovernment schools have been broken into three categories – Great Public Schools (GPS), other independent schools and Catholic schools. Further, the results may not be generalisable due to the exploratory and qualitative nature of this research. However, in-depth studies provide rich sources of data for further exploration. The researcher has long experience in the industry spanning 20 years. Rigorous attention to methodology has been used to ameliorate potential biases.

1.9 Outline of Thesis

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter One presents an overview of the study against the background to the changes in Queensland's education sector during the past 35 years resulting in the rapid growth of independent schools in Queensland. This problem area is broken into a series of research questions seeking to understand: (a) the characteristics of managers (principals) in schools, (b) how they conceptualise public relations, (c) how public relations contributes to this success, within their school environment, and (d) how that conceptualisation and their management characteristics impacts on their choice of public relations strategies.

Chapter Two explores existing public relations literature to develop a series of research propositions for further investigation. Chapter Three outlines the research design used to collect and analyse data. Chapter Four provides a more comprehensive background of the education sector specifically and the factors that have impacted on education in Queensland (and Australia as a whole). Chapter Five

provides the findings from interviews with principals. Chapter Six interprets these results, draws a number of conclusions and makes recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER TWO
Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

While previous positive and normative studies have focused on the role public relations should play in organisations and the need for management in all organisations to attend to public relations (Cutlip et al., 2006), there is little discussion in the public relations literature on why or how managers choose to enact public relations strategies for their organisations. If public relations is truly to cement itself as a management function, then public relations research must gain a better understanding of managers themselves as they are the ones who decide if and how public relations strategies should be employed in the organisation. This study seeks to explore whether there is any evidence of a relationship between management characteristics and how those characteristics impact on decisions managers make when choosing which public relations strategies to adopt in response to changes in the organisation's operating environment.

The following literature review will therefore move beyond studies that have sought to understand the use and support of public relations as a strategic function in an organisation, to identifying how and why managers choose a public relations approach to meet their organisational goals. It will seek to gain an understanding of how managers decide on what types of public relations strategy(ies) they will use to adapt to their changing environment, by exploring the organisational literature on the relationship between management characteristics and strategy. Once this foundation literature is established, literature on managers' understanding of public relations will be explored in conjunction with literature on strategic public relations – its definition and the role it can play in an organisation. Finally, the literature on how public relations is practised in schools is explored to provide a further theoretical context for this study.

2.2 Public Relations as a Strategic Function

Today, the public relations profession is focusing a great deal of attention on how public relations strategies can produce a positive *return on investment* (ROI) (Grunig, J. E., 2006). While it is difficult to place a monetary value on relationships with publics, in practice there are numerous examples of how good relationships have reduced the costs of litigation and negative publicity; gained from lobbying towards favourable regulation or legislation; or increased revenue through the sale of products and services to relevant stakeholders (Grunig, J. E., 2006). The extensive research currently being conducted on relationships may, in time, demonstrate relationships as the most important intangible asset to an organisation, thus reinforcing the value, and ROI, public relations provides (Bayon, Gutsche, & Bauer, 2002; Crosby & Johnson, 2004; Grunig, J. E., 2006). Relationships provide a means for evaluating both the long- and short-term contributions of public relations programs and of the overall function to organisational effectiveness (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Huang, 2004a, 2004b; Ki & Hon, 2007) through the measurement of such factors as trust, control mutuality, satisfaction and commitment as key components of high quality relationships (Grunig, J. E. & Huang, 2000; Hon & Grunig, 1999) and the organisation's reputation (Grunig, J. E. & Hung, 2002; Hon & Grunig, 1999; Yang, 2007; Yang & Grunig, 2005). Such factors are essential for organisations working within both favourable and unfavourable (turbulent) operating environments.

When features (political, social, regulatory, economic and competitive conditions) of an organisation's operating environment are favourable, strong relationships with key stakeholders assist in further maximising the organisation's position within its industry. In a volatile operating environment, when social, political, regulatory or economic trends are working against the organisation, or if competition increases; an organisation looks to such relationships to survive in a turbulent, unpredictable or changing environment.

The time an organisation benefits most from the contribution public relations makes through building relationships is when it is dealing with a volatile environment: when such outcomes as trust, satisfaction, commitment and the

organisation's reputation not only provide a return on investment, but are key components in safeguarding the investment itself.

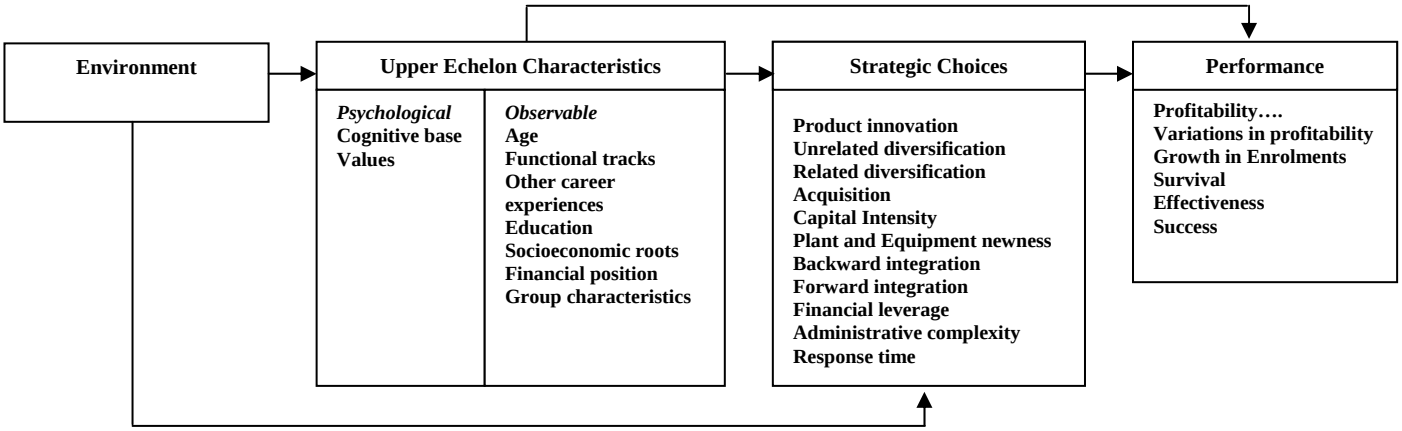
As identified in the definition of public relations by Cutlip et al. (2006) public relations is a boundary spanning function that strategically scans the environment to look for opportunities and threats that may impact on the organisation. Thus the need to "identify, establish and maintain mutually beneficial relations between an organisation and those on whom its success depends" (p. 8). The key for an organisation attempting to adapt to a changing environment is therefore not only on identifying key stakeholders (or publics) that it must build relationships with, but on what strategies it adopts to adapt to its operating environment to both establish and maintain those relationships that are so crucial to the organisation's growth (in favourable conditions) and survival (in a volatile environment). Such decisions on how to adapt to a changing environment are made by the management of the organisation – the CEO, managing director or in the case of schools, the principal and their senior management team. The purpose of this thesis, as identified in Chapter One, is to seek to understand how management characteristics are related to the public relations strategies adopted to respond to a changing environment. To this end, a review of the literature on the relationship between the characteristics of managers and the types of strategies they adopt was conducted.

The upper echelon theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) refers to the likely effects of environmental challenges on top management characteristics, the linkage between environmental conditions and upper echelon characteristics, and the need for a good fit between the two. The challenge for any organisation is that it must match its top management characteristics not only with strategy, but also with the external environment, especially when there is a need to cope with environmental uncertainties (Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Management characteristics influence success through implementation, in addition to their influence on strategy (Keeley & Roure, 1990). Managers' interpretations or perceptions of their organisation's external environment are influenced by their own backgrounds and experiences (Daft & Weick, 1984; Dutton & Jackson, 1987).

In order to understand how and why managers use public relations as a strategic function, the following section will turn to management and organisational literature on the relationship between managers' characteristics and how these impact on choice of strategy more broadly. Then I examine literature related to how and why managers use public relations as a strategic choice to respond to changes in their external environment.

2.3 The Relationship Between Management Characteristics and Organisational Strategy

Numerous studies have identified the relationship between a variety of management characteristics and strategy (Auh & Menguc, 2005; Chaganti & Sambharya, 1987; Hambrick, 2007; Jensen & Zajac, 2004; Strandholm, Kumar, & Subramanian, 2004) with several further linking management characteristics with organisational growth (Weinzimmer, 2000), performance (Goll & Rasheed, 2005; Strandholm et al. 2004) and success (Keeley & Roure, 1990). Jensen and Zajac further highlighted that corporate elites influence corporate strategies above and beyond economic factors such as prior performance, resource scarcity, and firm size. Management characteristics that have proven to impact on strategy include demographic variables such as age, education, level of experience and functional background; and psychological variables such as cognitive base and values which determine a manager's field of vision. Hambrick and Mason (1984) first integrated these psychological variables with other observable characteristics in their upper echelon perspective which reinforced that organisational outcomes (strategic choices and performance levels) are partially predicted by characteristics of top management (see Figure 2).



Source: Hambrick and Mason, 1984, p. 198

Figure 2. Hambrick and Mason's upper echelons perspective of organisations

Hambrick and Mason's (1984) upper echelons perspective has provided a foundation for numerous studies on the impact management characteristics have on strategic choices with a number of other characteristics said to impact on strategy including job demands (Hambrick, Finkelstein, & Mooney, 2005); managerial discretion (Hambrick, Finkelstein, Cho, & Jackson, 2005; Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1987); risk aversion, tenure, market-orientation (understanding customers' needs); as well as a range of other psychological variables such as personality, charisma, spontaneity, intuition, and flexibility and agile actions.

While many studies have focused on demographic characteristics of managers, more recently increasing attention has been paid to the demographic characteristics of the top management team (Papadakis & Barwise, 2002; Smith, Smith, Sims Jr., O'Bannon, & Scully, 1994). Goll & Rasheed (2005) go further to gain a better understanding of strategic decision making by linking research on top management team characteristics with decision-making processes and their impact on organisational performance. Such studies maintain that strategy is not developed by one person, but by a team (Gupta & Govindarajan, 1982). Hambrick and Mason (1984) laid the foundation for the investigation of the demographic characteristics of the top management team with the inclusion of group characteristics in their upper echelons model (see Figure 2), while a separate band of literature is built around

agency theory which looks at the impact governance bodies such as boards have on the strategic choice and direction of the organisation. Westphal (1999) showed how boards could influence strategic decision making through advice-giving interactions with CEOs, but did not examine whether this influence involved strategy formulation or the implementation of such strategies. Jensen & Zajac (2004) also acknowledged the impact of both demographic characteristics and governance issues on strategy development.

While some scholars argue that aggregate executive units of analysis such as the top management team are superior to the individual CEO because they explain more variance than the CEO unit of analysis (Bantel, 1993; Finkelstein, 1992), others maintain that when it is not feasible to conduct an analysis at the group level, the simple CEO provides a useful unit of analysis (Jensen & Zajac, 2004). While this strategy has the disadvantage of not considering the other corporate elites and makes it impossible to address group-level phenomena such as group heterogeneity (Wiersema, 1992); Jensen and Zajac showed that their completely disaggregated model which isolates CEO effect, generally had greater predictive significance. As the single most powerful member of the corporate elite, the CEO is often considered the most important determinant of other corporate elites' influence (Jensen & Zajac; Hambrick & Mason, 1984). Jensen & Zajac also noted that investigation of the top management team may be more relevant for larger organisations which have a broader range of constituents. For this study of schools, which individually are relatively small organisations, a focus on principals as CEOs appears appropriate.

No set of variables can hope to capture all relevant aspects; that is, there will always be omitted variables and their effects will be reflected in those included variables with which they are correlated (Keeley & Roure, 1990). A managerial variable may not be useful in explaining performance, but it may influence the choice of strategy which in turn affects performance. The literature did, however, focus on a number of key demographic characteristics which will form the basis of this study. These are age, education, tenure and experience.

2.3.1 Age

Wiersema (1992) and Thomas, Litschert, and Ramaswamy (1991) argue that an individual's age is expected to influence strategic decision making perspectives and choices with younger managers more willing to undertake corporate change. Hambrick & Mason (1984) proposed that older executives tend to be more conservative and have a bias for maintaining the status quo whereas younger executives typically take more risks. Early studies found age to influence the manner in which a decision is made as well as the quality of the decision (Kirchner, 1958): while an increasing age leads to the hesitation to challenge the system of formal rules and less confidence in being right (Child, 1974).

Taylor (1975) found that older decision makers tend to take longer to reach decisions and that they seek greater amounts of information, are able to diagnose the value of information more accurately and are less confident of their decisions and more willing to reconsider them. Hambrick and Mason (1984) further pointed out that older executives are likely to avoid risky decisions because financial and career security are important to them.

Age is combined with a number of variables in studies which show that age, education and length of industry experience with younger, less experienced, but more educated managers tend to pursue relatively more innovative strategies (Grimm & Smith, 1985; Herrmann & Datta, 2005). A summary of this literature is presented in Table 1.

2.3.2 Education

The literature shows similar findings on education as a variable which impacts on the choice of strategy in an organisation. The literature also digresses into a number of streams including the level of education managers have both in terms of status of qualifications and number of qualifications, as well as the breadth of education they have – that is, qualifications in one discipline or more.

Table 1.

Attributes of Managers' Characteristics Related to age

The impact of age on strategy	**Author/s**
Older decision makers tend to take longer to reach decisions, seek greater amounts of information, are less confident of their decisions and more willing to reconsider them.	Taylor (1975)
Older executives are likely to avoid risky decisions because financial and career security are important to them.	Hambrick and Mason (1984)
Managerial age has an influence on the strategic evaluation of acquisition candidates.	Hitt and Tyler (1991)
CEOs of prospector firms were younger than their defender counterparts.	Thomas et al. (1991)
Individual age influences strategic decision making perspectives and choices.	Wiersema (1992)
Younger managers are more likely to undertake corporate change.	Weinzimmer (2000) Goll and Rasheed (2005) Child (1974)

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

The level of education has consistently been linked to receptivity of innovation (Kimberly & Evanisko, 1981). Dollinger (1984) suggests that more educated managers are likely to engage in boundary spanning, tolerate ambiguity and show ability for "integrative complexity" (p. 353). Thomas et al. (1991) found that CEOs of prospector firms had more education than CEOs of defender firms. Wiersema and Bantel (1993) found that more educated managers are likely to be open to changes in corporate strategy. Education in general, and professional management education in particular, emphasises application of analytic techniques to

decision making, compared to the more risk-prone judgements of "self-made" executives (Goll & Rasheed, 2005). A summary of this literature is presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Attributes of Managers' Characteristics Related to Education

The impact of education on strategy	**Author/s**
The level of education has consistently been linked to receptivity of innovation.	Kimberly and Evanisko (1981)
More educated managers are likely to engage in boundary spanning, tolerate ambiguity and show ability for "integrative complexity".	Dollinger (1984)
CEOs of prospector firms had more education than CEOs of defender firms.	Thomas et al. (1991)
More educated managers are likely to be open to changes in corporate strategy.	Wiersema and Bantel (1993)
Education in general, and professional management education in particular, emphasizes application of analytic techniques to decision making, compared to the more risk-prone judgements of "self-made" executives.	Goll and Rasheed (2005)

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

2.3.3 Tenure

Tenure is broken into two areas in the literature – organisational tenure and industry tenure. Organisational tenure denotes the permanency in a managerial role within an organisation with some managers employed under set contracts, while others hold permanent positions. There have been a few studies on organisational tenure as it relates to strategy implementation (Chaganti & Sambharya, 1987; Thomas et al. 1991). Of these, Hambrick, Geletkanycz, and Fredrickson (1993) have suggested that CEOs with long tenure may become "stale in the saddle" (p. 89), while Hambrick

and Fukutomi (1991) have argued that long-tenured CEOs become excessively committed to a managerial paradigm.

Similar to long-term organisational tenure, long industry tenure is positively associated with an increase in industry-specific knowledge (Govindarajan, 1989). This is seen to be useful when implementing an efficiency focused strategy but provides a restrictive knowledge base to draw from when facing a problem (Strandholm et al., 2004). This notion of industry tenure was further explored by Gupta (1984) who found that the longer executives have worked in a particular industry, the more familiar they are likely to be with its structure and prevailing/potential competitive strategies (Gupta, 1984). A summary of this literature is presented in Table 3.

Table 3.

Attributes of Managers' Characteristics Related to Tenure

The impact of tenure on strategy	**Author/s**
Organisational tenure	
CEOs with long tenure may become 'stale in the saddle'.	Hambrick, Geletkanycz, and Frederickson (1993)
Long-tenured CEOs become excessively committed to a managerial paradigm.	Hambrick and Fukutomi (1991)
Industry tenure	
Long term industry tenure is positively associated with an increase in industry-specific knowledge.	Govindarajan (1989)
Long term industry tenure is useful when implementing an efficiency focused strategy but provides a restrictive knowledge base to draw from when facing a problem.	Strandholm et al. (2004)

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

2.3.4 Experience

Experience is a separate management characteristic identified in many studies which can be closely linked to the notion of industry tenure in terms of the length of experience a manager had within a particular field. Hambrick and Mason (1984) also found that an executive with more career experience influences choices. However experience can be broken down in a number of other ways which impact on managers' characteristics including functional experience, length of experience and other career experiences.

Inside/Outside Experience

One aspect of the literature on experience as a management characteristic variable that impacts on strategy, examines the impact of managers who are recruited from outside the organisation and inside the organisation. Grimm & Smith (1991) found that managers recruited from outside the organisation initiate change and determine the new strategic direction for their firm. A study by Boeker (1997) also provided strong evidence that when firms recruit a new CEO from outside the organisation, they tend to initiate strategic changes that lead the firm to resemble the CEO's prior employer (Sambharya, 1996). In contrast, Tushman and Rosenkopf (1996) found that insiders are more likely to maintain an organisation's existing strategy than outsiders.

Two key areas of experience now discussed include functional and other career experiences.

Functional Experience

Functional experience of managers is the most widely cited demographic characteristic thought to affect corporate strategy (Auh & Menguc, 2005; Jensen & Zajac, 2004; Strandholm et al., 2004; Knight, 1999, as cited in Auh & Menguc, 2005). Dearborn and Simon (1958) first examined the relationship between functional background experiences and strategic decisions. They argued that managers' experiences bias their attention and proposed solutions to complex business situations and showed that executives in an experimental setting gravitated towards interpretations of a complex business situation that reflected their own functional background.

Functional background experiences also integrate the two schools of thought on how management characteristics affect strategy by being an important component of both the demographically-based (upper echelon) and positionally-based (agency theory) preferences. While functional experience is an important variable in the management literature, one needs to question the relevance of this variable in schools based on the differences between schools and corporate entities. A number of functional areas have been matched to strategy (Auh & Menguc, 2005; Jensen & Zajac, 2004; Strandholm et al., 2004) with a particular focus on marketing's representation on the top management team. According to Auh & Menguc (2005), functional diversity has the most theoretical and managerial significance from a marketing perspective.

Very little is known about how the composition of the functional diversity within the top management team influences the effectiveness of strategic orientations (Auh & Menguc, 2005). Auh and Menguc examined this relationship under varying levels of environmental turbulence and inter-functional coordination.

Other career experiences

Executives tend to carry a "bag of tricks" which are believed to work in certain situations. These are displayed in the form of their perceptions, beliefs and values based on their previous experience (Chaganti & Sambharya, 1987). Executives cope with the inherent complexity of strategic decision making by referring to their preexisting beliefs about appropriate strategic behaviour which is shaped by prior experience in similar roles (Boeker, 1997; Geletkanycz & Black, 2001; Geletkanycz & Hambrick, 1997). Executive experience predicts the direction of strategic change (Boeker, 1997; Geletkanycz & Hambrick, 1997), however a study by Westphal and Fredrickson (2001) suggests the influence of managers over strategy could mask the influence of boards. What appear to be executive effects on corporate strategy, may actually be board effects (Westphal & Fredrickson) and therefore suggest upper echelons research should devote greater attention to how boards of directors may determine the relationships between top management characteristics and organisational outcomes. Prior evidence that demographic characteristics of top managers predict corporate strategy and performance may result from the influence

of board preferences on both executive selection and strategic change. A summary of this literature is presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

Attributes of Managers' Characteristics Related to Experience

The impact of experience on strategy	**Author/s**
Insider/Outsider	
Managers recruited from outside the organisation initiate change and determine the new strategic direction for their firm.	Grimm and Smith (1991)
When firms recruit a new CEO from outside the organisation, they tend to initiate strategic changes that lead the firm to resemble the CEOs prior employer.	Boeker (1997) Sambharya (1996)
Insiders are more likely to maintain an organisation's existing strategy than outsiders.	Tushman and Rosenkopf (1996)
Functional Tracks/Other Career Experience	
Functional diversity within the top management team influences the effectiveness of strategic orientations.	Auh and Menguc (2005)
Executives in an experimental setting gravitated towards interpretations of a complex business situation that reflected their own functional background.	Dearborn and Simon (1958)

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

2.3.5 Summary of Insights on Managers' Characteristics

As identified, there are four key management characteristics that are important for understanding how and why managers determine organisational strategy - age, education, tenure and experience. These studies have considered strategy in a broad

sense, although there have been limited studies (e.g. Auh & Menguc, 2005) that have considered the use of marketing in the organisational strategy. The way an executive defines the problem facing the company determines the range of strategies pursued by the organisation. This definition is biased by the functional specialisation of the top executive and influences the course of action adopted (Chaganti & Sambharya, 1987; Dearborn & Simon, 1958). Executives who have made it to the top from within the organisation tend to have a very restricted knowledge base from which to formulate corporate responses to environmental changes (Hambrick & Mason, 1984), while outsiders are thought to have a wider knowledge base.

Hatten, Schendel, and Cooper, 1978 found that different organisations compete differently within the same industry based on their unique perception of the environments, and Kim and Lim (1988) found that different firms in the same industry faced different environmental constraints and contingencies. This suggests that previous studies indicate that differences in strategies within a particular field/industry are related to the experience of management. Managers' interpretations or perceptions of their organisation's external environment are influenced by their own backgrounds and experiences (Daft & Weick, 1984; Dutton & Jackson, 1987).

2.4 Management Understanding and Support of Public Relations

The literature inherently discusses and supports the need for managers to support public relations as a management function in organisations by including it in the dominant coalition (Broom & Smith, 1979; J. E. Grunig, 1992). This assumption in the public relations literature, means that managers of an organisation must firstly determine if and how public relations will be used to achieve organisational goals. Therefore, in order to consider public relations as a management function, there first needs to be organisational support for public relations before the public relations manager can be a part of the dominant coalition. This distinction is rarely acknowledged in the public relations literature. In this section, literature related to manager understanding and support for public relations is explored. This is a useful contribution to the calls made in the public relations literature for public relations to be adopted by organisations, and suggests that managers, not industries, are determinants of the use of public relations strategy.

2.4.1 Management Understanding of Public Relations

The foundation of the public relations literature on management's understanding and support of public relations revolves around its place within and its support by the dominant coalition as laid out in the Excellence studies (J. E. Grunig, 1992). Rhee (2002) found support of the dominant coalition was highly correlated to the value that both the organisation and practitioners themselves place on public relations. The dominant coalition is a pivotal concept in mainstream public relations theory as membership in this powerful decision making group is seen to advance the profession's status (Berger, 2005). Despite the steady stream of public relations literature that reinforces the need for public relations to play a role within the dominant coalition, there are few studies which actually explore managers' understanding and support of public relations. One of the few was a postgraduate study (Pollack, 1986) which has been extensively cited by public relations authors (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997; Dozier, 1990; Grunig, J. E., 2006; Plowman, 1998; Reber, Cropp, & Cameron, 2003).

Pollack (1986) tested management understanding and support of the public relations function against J. E. Grunig's (2006) four models of public relations practice through a variety of factors including:

- top management support;
- involvement of the public relations director in major decisions;
- whether public relations decisions are made by the public relations director or top management;
- influence of the public relations department in organisational decision-making;
- authority level of the public relations department;
- percentage of recommendations made by the public relations department that were implemented by the organisation; and
- how important the dominant coalition believes public relations is to organisational success (Grunig, J. E. & Grunig, 1989, p. 52).

Key insights from Pollack's work that contribute to this study are now discussed.

2.4.2 Support by the Dominant Coalition

Pollack (1986) found one of the factors that provided the greatest correlation with management support of the strategic two-way symmetrical model was public relations' representation in the dominant coalition. This is an alternative, and more widely used, interpretation of management function which takes the interpretation of Cutlip et al. (2006) one step further to focus on the public relations manager's involvement in strategic management (Berger, 2005; Grunig, J. E., 2006; White & Dozier, 1992). The focus of this interpretation of public relations as a management function is that public relations must be empowered by gaining acceptance from, and being represented, within the dominant coalition or from having access to these powerful members of the organisation (Plowman, 1998).

While some researchers believe that public relations loses its objectivity by being part of the dominant coalition, others highlight the ethical, external voice public relations provides for an organisation (Botan & Hazelton, 1989; DeSanto, Moss, & Newman, 2007; Heath, 2000; Kim & Reber, 2009). Further, J. E. Grunig (2006) noted that the dominant coalition can be made up of internal and external members from all levels on the organisational hierarchy. Similarly, Berger (2005) found that there is no single dominant coalition in an organisation. Instead, different coalitions of strategic managers are developed for different decisions with public relations included as a member of these coalitions when its expertise was relevant to a decision.

2.4.3 Public Relations Approaches Most Valued by Managers

The importance of management's understanding and support of public relations on determining what role it will play in organisations was further highlighted by a finding in J. E. Grunig's Excellence study (1992). J. E. Grunig found the six public relations approaches that CEOs identified as contributing most to strategic management were: (a) regular research activities, (b) research to answer specific questions, (c) other formal approaches to gathering information, (d) informal approaches to gathering information, (e) contacts with knowledgeable people outside the organisation and, (f) judgement based on experience. It was also found that all six

contributions increased dramatically in organisations where management highly valued public relations.

Although writers on strategic management discuss the relationship between the organisation's operating environment, its constituents (publics), and its response (strategy), more recent public relations literature questions the skills and training of public relations practitioners to perform at this level. (Brown & Fall, 2005; Lauzen, M. A., 1992; Grunig, J. E., 2006). This is supported by a number of studies which found that in the most favourable conditions for management to call on public relations to perform a management function – a turbulent environment, a participative culture in the organisation in which management values collaboration with publics – practitioners were lacking the skills to perform this boundary spanning role. Public relations professionals who possess such managerial skills, sufficient experience, and a managerial perspective are therefore more likely to make it into the inner circle (Berger, 2005).

2.4.4 Location of Public Relations in Organisational Structure

As discussed, which definitions work together, as management's understanding and support of public relations, appear related to whether public relations will perform as a management function in the organisation. That is, management's understanding of the strategic role public relations can play in an organisation and its support of public relations' role in the dominant coalition, will determine where public relations sits within the organisational structure.

The other factor that correlated highly with management support of the public relations function in Pollack's study (Pollack, 1986) was the autonomy of the public relations department. This autonomy or empowerment of the public relations function is another translation of public relations as a management function with this core of research asserting that public relations should exist within a horizontal structure in organisations, alongside other management functions, to make a unique contribution to strategic management rather than playing a sublimated role within a vertical structure under marketing, human resources, or even management itself (Ehling, White, & Grunig, 1992; Grunig, J. E., 2006; Holder & Ehling, 1967; Hutton,

1999). A number of public relations researchers support this need for empowerment of public relations through the literature on encroachment, that is, the assignment of public relations roles to individuals without public relations training (Lauzen, M. M., 1991; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992). Hutton attributes this encroachment to public relations' identity crisis due to the failure of public relations scholars and practitioners to agree on the fundamental nature and scope of the discipline.

2.4.5 Roles of Public Relations

Apart from where public relations fits within the organisational structure, another way of determining management's support and understanding of public relations is what role it plays within the organisation. Again, there are contrary findings in the literature on how public relations is practised in organisations which is evidenced by the fact that research on public relations roles is the largest category of most cited works in the field (Pasadeos, Renfro, and Hanily, 1999). A two-way dichotomy of how public relations is practised in organisations forms the basis of much of this work. This dichotomy stems from a study of members of the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA) (Broom & Smith, 1979). From this study, Broom and Smith established a four role typology based on how clients perceive the efficacy of different public relations roles. Three of the four roles identified – the expert prescriber, communication facilitator and problem-solving process facilitator – were found to be highly intercorrelated with each other performing a management function to varying degrees. The fourth role, however – the communication technician – was distinct to the other three roles, with little correlation to most of the management and decision-making measures (see Table 5).

Broom and Smith's (1979) four role typology led to a stream of research on public relations roles by Broom and Dozier (1986) which conceptualised the two distinct public relations roles of manager and technician that are used in current research. A summary of this literature is presented in Table 5.

Table 5.

Summary of Research on Roles Theory

Role	Role description	Link to management	Role in decision-making
Management functions:			
Expert prescriber	• Research • Problem definition • Development of PR plan • High risk role.	Management: • not vested in strategies and programs dictated by public relations 'expert'. • May become passive and dependent on "expert's" advice.	Acts as authority on public relations problems and solutions but no guarantee of integration of public relations thinking into daily stream of management decisions.
Communication facilitator	In boundary spanning role, practitioner acts as: • Liaison • Interpreter • Mediator between organisation and its publics.	Practitioner in collaborative relationships with both management and the organisation's various publics.	Acts as sensitive "go-between" or information broker.
Problem-solving process facilitator	Practitioner collaborates with line management to define and solve problems.	Member of management team.	Applies rational problem-solving process with key organisational actors in public relations planning and programming. Highest correlation with decision-making index (Johnson & Acharya, 1982).
Technical functions			
Communication technician	• Produces communication materials • Writing • Editing • Working with media • Implements public relations plans.	Limited management role.	Does not collaborate in process leading to any decisions (including public relations planning). Positively correlated with involvement in decisions on implementation plans (Johnson & Acharya, 1982).
Media relations specialist	Specialises in media relations with external media (rather than controlled internal media).	Senior ranking advisors to decision makers.	Make no policy decisions, nor held accountable for outcomes.
Communication liaisons	Liaison between management and publics.	Informs management and communicates with publics.	Isolated from decision-making and accountability.

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

2.4.6 Public Relations' Role in Decision Making

As a management function, involvement in decision making is fundamental to the very definition of public relations within organisations (Broom & Dozier, 1986, p. 42). Childers (1989) and Ferguson (2001) identified the most significant distinction between the management and technician roles was the power of decision-making that public relations managers had, which technicians did not. This was reinforced by Johnson and Acharya (1982) who found the expert and two process roles correlated strongly with various aspects of decision-making. This same study, which measured Broom and Smith's (1979) original data with various aspects of management decision-making, found a positive correlation on one item of decision making, demonstrating a relationship between the communication technician role and involvement in decisions on the implementation of plans (see Table 5).

In more recent years, several studies (Leichty & Springston, 1996; Reagan, 1992) have questioned whether the management and technician roles are mutually exclusive with Leichty and Springston arguing that the management scale used in the original 1979 study lacked a coherent theoretical justification. There has been an increased overlap between the manager and technician role, as well as a loss of breadth of duties within each role (Leichty & Springston; Toth, 1997, as cited in Zoch, Patterson, & Olson, 1997, p. 366). Creedon (1991) also argued that the role of technician could also involve some level of decision-making. This is further evidenced in two minor roles – media relations specialist and communication liaison – which Dozier (1990) found in a factor analysis of the original data. The media relations role was also identified in a study by Ferguson (2001) who combined Broom and Dozier's (1986) two technical functions into the role of journalist-technical communicator. Ferguson went on to identify three further public relations roles – problem solving manager, research manager and staff manager – based on a list of activities practitioners performed. It could be argued that the media relations role may also include decisions on which media to target and how to target them in terms of message, channel and timing. Similarly, while the communication liaison role is isolated from decision-making and accountability, it informs management through the relationships it holds with key publics. Nevertheless, the two-role typology of manager and technician has remained stable and robust (Broom &

Dozier) with a study by Reagan et al (1992) again verifying the two role dichotomy of manager and technician in public relations practice.

It is important to note that while the manager/technician debate is important in understanding how public relations is practised in organisations, the focus of this study is on how the role of the public relations practitioner in organisations is determined. Top management's view about the nature of public relations has been found to explain the most variance in public relations behaviour (Grunig, J. E., 2006). Therefore senior managers in the organisation determine in the first instance whether public relations is required in the organisation, and if so, what role it will play in that response, and ultimately what public relations strategies will be implemented.

2.4.7 Summary

The review of the public relations literature highlights two key points about how the strategic role of public relations is adopted in organisations based on managers' understanding of public relations and their use of the function to respond to increased competition within their environment. These are:

1. Management understanding and appreciation of the role of public relations:
    - Management understanding of the role public relations plays within an organisation.
    - Public relations contributions most valued by management.

2. Management use of public relations in organisations:
    - Location of public relations within the organisational structure and within the dominant coalition.
    - Roles and activities of public relations practitioners – managers and technicians.
    - Level of the decision making of public relations practitioner within the organisation.

2.5 Public Relations in Schools

As this study is focused on public relations in schools, the literature related to understanding the role of public relations in schools is now explored. Most studies of public relations practitioners in schools are divided on whether school practitioners play the role of managers or technicians. In a study by Genzer (1993, as cited in Zoch et al., 1997, p. 364), practitioners in schools performed the role of technicians with their most frequent activities being the drafting, editing and production of communication materials such as newsletters and news releases. A study by Gainey (2009), however, showed school public relations practitioners to be on the management team with their primary responsibilities being to plan and provide public relations counsel to the management of schools and others within the school system. A 1997 study, by Zoch et al., of public relations practitioners working in schools, found that school public relations practitioners are not likely to enact either the management, or the technician, role over each other, which may be a factor distinct to the more specialised setting of public relations (and small size of the typical public relations department) in schools.

This study also raised concerns about how public relations is being practised in educational settings (Zoch et al., 1997). While this study used and confirmed some components of Broom and Dozier's (1986) two role dichotomy, it went further to look at characteristics of public relations practitioners in schools with a focus on education and encroachment into public relations roles by staff with no public relations training such as teachers "promoted out of the classroom" (p. 371) and secretaries. In their study of 43 school public relations practitioners in South Carolina, 34% of respondents had no public relations experience and 61.4% had degrees in fields other than communication. The reasoning schools provided for such encroachment was to maximise resources by having staff perform a number of roles. The concern of Zoch et al. however was "the question of whether diluting the public relations function is successfully stretching resources, or is harming relations with essential publics" (p. 373). Further Zoch et al. state that when encroachment takes place "public relations is relegated to a technical or supporting function and is no longer itself considered a management function" (p. 363).

These findings suggest that public relations in a school setting may differ from other organisational settings due to limited understanding of the strategic role public relations can play within the organisation.

2.6 Development of Research Questions

Public relations is noted to be a strategic function. Hambrick and Mason (1984) propose that strategic decisions in an organisation are determined by management characteristics. The central demographic characteristics are age, education, tenure and experience. These characteristics have been linked to managers' understanding of the nature and contribution of public relations and those contributions of public relations most valued by management to determine what type of strategy is adopted for the organisation to respond to a changing environment. A review of the public relations literature revealed that public relations is suggested to be a management function. The review also revealed however that there has been minimal work done on understanding why managers choose to use public relations. None of the public relations literature has considered the role of managers' characteristics in the choice of public relations strategies used to respond to a changing, or highly competitive, environment. In addition, work on public relations in schools has not examined this question. Therefore, the overriding research question of this study is:

How are management characteristics of principals related to the understanding and use of public relations strategies adopted in schools?

A number of guiding research questions have also been developed in order to address this overriding question.

RQ i): What management characteristics do principals demonstrate in schools?

RQ ii): What understanding do principals have of public relations?

RQ iii): What public relations strategies do principals use?

Through addressing these questions, with data from principals in a sample of Queensland schools, this study seeks to provide exploratory insights into why managers select public relations strategies in schools. As such, the findings of this study can further inform the literature of organisational adoption of public relations as a strategic function.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented literature related to management characteristics as a factor in shaping organisational strategy, and existing public relations literature on understanding how public relations strategies are selected. Based on this literature, a series of research questions have been developed to shape this study. In Chapter Three, the methodology adopted to investigate this research is presented

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The literature review in Chapter Two highlighted the need to gain greater insights into managers' understanding and support if public relations is to fulfil its claim as a strategic function in organisations. Despite this theme being reinforced by public relations scholars and practitioners, little research has been conducted into the understanding managers have of public relations or what determines the level of support they give the function. This chapter will look at how to bring findings from these two areas of the literature together to develop a qualitative study to explore the relationship the characteristics of managers play in the selection of public relations strategies in Queensland schools.

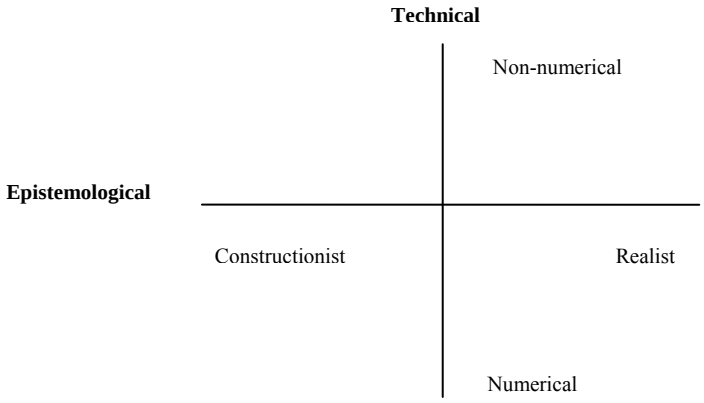
3.2 Research Purpose

The objective of this study is to gain a better understanding of the characteristics of managers within schools, their understanding and support of public relations and how these impact on the public relations strategies they adopt to respond to their changing (and increasingly competitive) operating environment.

3.3 Research Approach

Researchers operate within a scientific paradigm which reflects how researchers aim to give a credible account of the social world (Miles & Huberman, 1994) based on how they think about and make sense of the complexities of the real world (Patton, 2002). Quantitative and qualitative research are viewed as two contradictory research paradigms (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) which then represent a number of paradigmatic positions in the quantity/quality debate – the quantitative view (experimental, deductive, positivist and realist) and the qualitative view (naturalistic, contextual, interpretive and constructionist) (Henwood, 1996). Bryman (1988) represented the distinct epistemological and technical differences within this debate from the objective, rationality-based views of the positivists advocating numeric-

based quantitative research, to the subjective constructivists who seek understanding of the meanings people attach to their world through the non-numerical data of qualitative research (see Figure 3).



Source: Bryman, 1988.

Figure 3. Technical and epistemological versions of the quantity-quality debate

In many ways, the major trade off between quantitative and qualitative methods is between breadth and depth, providing strengths and weaknesses in each. Miles and Huberman (1994) maintain that qualitative research is the best strategy for discovering, exploring a new area, developing hypotheses and testing hypotheses. This is made possible by the fact that data collection is not constrained by predetermined categories of analysis which contributes to the depth and detail of qualitative data (Patton, 2002). Qualitative data is a "source of well-grounded, rich descriptions and explanations of processes in identifiable local contexts" and helps researchers get beyond initial conceptions to generate or revise conceptual frameworks. Words, especially organised into incidents or stories, have a quality of "undeniability" and add a concrete, vivid, meaningful flavour that often "proves far more convincing to a reader… than pages of summarised numbers" (Miles & Huberman, p. 1).

However, some researchers consider that findings from qualitative methods lack the generalisability, or representative claims, that researchers using quantitative methods can make. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest the paradigms of social research are "shifting beneath our feet" (p. 5), with an increasing number of researchers seeing the world with more pragmatic, ecumenical eyes (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). This is supported by Lee (1991) who believes that each perspective adds a meaningful layer without necessarily contradicting the others. Frey, Botan and Kreps (2000) suggest that both quantitative and qualitative measurements provide researchers with different, but potentially complementary, ways of measuring operationally defined concepts, with others advocating a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods (Henwood, 1996; Patton, 2002; Steinberg, 2004).

While there is much debate on the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative approaches, this study will primarily follow a qualitative method of enquiry because it seeks to gain insights into understandings of actors in natural settings. As an inductive data collection method, qualitative research is an empirically-based, data-driven approach that helps us to understand social phenomenon in natural settings with the emphasis on meanings, experiences and the views of all participants (Pope & Mays, 1996). In particular, qualitative research "can be used to gather data about organisational actors' experiences and insights into organisational life" (Pope & Mays, p. 3)**.** This approach is particularly suitable to this study as it seeks to examine one set of organisational actors – principals – and their insights into a key aspect of organisational life – public relations strategies.

Qualitative research also recognises the researcher as a human instrument in the research process, systematically arranging and presenting information to search for meaning in the data collected. It therefore continues to be emergent with theory and data analysis at the same time, even after data collection begins, until no new information is being captured (Patton, 2002). Being able to vary data collection times and methods as a study proceeds provides a great deal of openness and flexibility, and gives further confidence that the researcher has really understood what has been going on (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Henwood and Pidgeon (1994) identify three strands of qualitative enquiry, and their respective epistemologies (see Table 6). Each strand is based on the various ways researchers seek to justify qualitative research. Strand I assesses research on the basis of reliability and validity; Strand II focuses on generating new theory, while being firmly grounded in participants' own accounts; while Strand III constructs representations of objects in the world by focusing on the reflexive functions of language. Table 6 further illustrates the associated relationship between the researcher and reality (epistemology) and the techniques used to discover that reality (methodology) within each of these strands.

Table 6.

Three Strands of Qualitative Inquiry

Broad strand	*Epistemology*	*Methodological principles*	*Methods & examples*
Strand 1			
Reliability and validity	Empiricism	Discovery of valid representations (using induction)	'Data display' model (Miles & Huberman, 1984, 1994) Content analysis (Krippendorf, 1980)
Strand II			
Generativity and grounding	Contextualism	Construction of intersubjective meaning (or *Verstehen)*	Grounded theory (Glausser & Strauss, 1967, as cited in Tivinarlik & Wanat, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) Ethogenics (Harre & Secord, 1972)
Strand III			
Discursive and reflexive	Constructivism	Interpretative analysis (highlighting deconstruction of texts)	Discourse analysis (Burman & Parker, 1993) Narrative analysis (Gergen, 1994; Riesman, 1993)

Note. Adapted from Henwood and Pidgeon, 1994

Interpretive research can provide more in-depth information than traditional survey methods (Kreps, Herndon, & Arneson, 1993). Interpretevists of all types insist that researchers are no more "detached" from their objects of study than their informants. They argue that researchers have their own understandings and conceptual orientations, and are members of a particular culture at a specific moment

(Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 8). For interpretivist and constructivist researchers, there is no unambiguous social reality ”out there” to be accounted for. In this view, social processes cannot be independent of social actors' ways of constructing and describing them (Miles & Huberman). Some researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003) believe that all research is interpretive because sets of beliefs, and feelings about the world and how it should be understood, are inherent in the guiding thoughts behind the research. Under the constructivist perspective, reality is socially constructed and can only be understood in context (Willis, 2007). As such, this research project will adopt an interpretive and constructivist approach to gain an understanding of organisational issues and priorities from a social actor's (principal's) perspective (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

3.4 Research Design

Research design is defined by Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Lowe (1991, p. 21, as cited in Pandit, 1996) as, "… the overall configuration of a piece of research: what kind of evidence is gathered from where, and how much evidence is interpreted in order to provide good answers to basic research question [s]".

A combined data collection approach is applied given the exploratory nature of this study. A qualitative approach is primarily used to explore how principals (managers) in schools choose public relations strategies to respond to their changing environment. This study uses semi-structured interviews with principals, and insights from organisational and policy documents about the context in which the managers make these choices.

3.5 Selection of Study Site

Given the exploratory nature of this study, a maximum variation sampling frame was selected to tap into a wide range of qualities, attributes and situations in each type of school. Schwandt (1997, as cited in Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) describes this nonprobability approach as "sites or cases are chosen because there may be good reason to believe that 'what goes on there' is critical to understanding some process or concept, or to testing or elaborating some theory" (p. 128). Schools from four categories of Queensland schools - State, GPS, Independent and Catholic - were

selected from a broad geographic region in Brisbane from inner-city and throughout its western suburbs. Sampling units taken from geographical regions can contain many elements (Schofield, 2006). Further, in accordance with Lindlof & Taylor's (2002) definition of maximum variation sampling, exemplars representing a wide range of characteristics were selected within the defined geographic region for this study. Such characteristics included:

- size of the school in terms of enrolments – small, medium and large schools were selected within each of the four categories where possible;
- location of the school within the defined geographic boundaries – inner city schools through to those schools in the outer western suburbs were covered in each category;
- single sex vs coeducational schools – at a practical level, this was only really possible in GPS schools as the researcher discovered that all other independent schools within this region (and mostly across Brisbane) are coeducational, while many of the single sex Catholic schools in this region were also GPS schools (other Catholic schools were sought, however, the principals did not wish to participate). All state schools are also coeducational;
- gender of principal – an attempt was made to cover an equal number of male and female respondents, however, of the sample of schools selected, only three of the ten principals were female.

As a purposive sampling technique, maximum variation sampling is designed to map relevant characteristics of the population rather than mirror the number of people who share those characteristics. Therefore, a small sample was chosen which is consistent with qualitative methods which seek to collect large quantities of data from a small sample. The final size of the sample was reached when additional interviews reached saturation by ceasing to add additional value to this study. In this case, three GPS principals were interviewed to cover the variation of large, medium and small schools; girls' versus boys' schools; and male versus female principals in the geographic area within this category. Similarly three state school principals were interviewed based on their location at each of the geographic boundaries within this area. While female principals do run schools within this area, their schools were not

seen to be actively promoting themselves. Size was irrelevant for state schools as all state schools in the area under study share similar numbers, and all are coeducational. Only two Catholic school principals (one male, one female) and two independent school principals (one male, one female) were interviewed based on their geographic location and size. While boys only and girls only Catholic schools did operate in this area, principals of those schools targeted were unwilling to be involved in this study. The consistent factor across all schools was that each of them were either well known or were visibly promoting their school, which caught the attention of the investigator.

Table 7 illustrates the variety of schools selected to attempt to gain some representation of the different types and sizes of schools within each of the four groups.

Table 7.

Overview of Schools Used in the Study

School	Location	Year Levels	Student Gender
GPS 1	Inner city	P – 12	All boys
GPS 2	Western suburbs	P – 12	All girls
GPS 3	Outer-western suburbs	P – 12	All boys
Ind 1	Western suburbs	P – 12	Co-educational
Ind 2	Outer-western suburbs	P – 12	Co-educational
Cath 1	Inner city	8 – 12	Co-educational
Cath 2	Outer-western suburbs	8 – 12	Co-educational
State 1	Inner city	8 – 12	Co-educational
State 2	Western suburbs	8 – 12	Co-educational
State 3	Outer-western suburbs	8 – 12	Co-educational

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

3.6 Sources of Evidence

This study uses two main sources of evidence for exploring the research questions. The chief source of evidence was obtained from semi-structured, in-depth interviews

with the managers (principals) from each school. These interviews allowed the researcher to gain valuable insights on how each principal defined public relations and assess their understanding and support of the role it could play within a school environment. Demographic (management) characteristics of each principal were also collected. All interviews were recorded with the consent of each participant and transcribed to ensure total recall and accuracy in this stage of the data collection (Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

In addition, analysis of key school policy documents and information from the schools in the study was undertaken to provide an understanding of the political, social, technological, regulatory, economic and competitive environment schools are operating within.

3.7 Data Collection Tools

3.7.1 Semi-unstructured Interviews

Qualitative interviews are the primary data collection method used in this study based on the strength of this methodology in focusing directly on the topic under investigation (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Patton, 2002). As one of the primary sources of data collection in qualitative research, interviews are sometimes described as a conversation with a purpose which can provide rich and sufficient data on their own, or alternatively be employed as one of several methods to collect data (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). An open-ended, unstructured interview was conducted in the principal's office in each of the 10 schools, using a common set of questions (see Appendix 1 for the Interview Proforma). Each interview took between 45 and 60 minutes with the exception of one interview which went for more than two hours. Using an open-ended, unstructured interview proforma provided flexibility which allows the interviewer to probe deeper into particular areas when certain points are raised by respondents. This flexibility is a major advantage of this type of research as it "enables the interviewer to explore more fully the opinions and behaviours of some respondents" (Dane, 1990, p. 129). Open-ended questions do not constrain the respondent's beliefs or opinions to categories predetermined by the researcher, as fully standardised methods of data collection must do. Further, uncoded questions

allow the researcher to search the full range of responses before reducing replies to a set of categories, and the following translation of replies (Sapsford, 2006).

3.7.2 Interview Proforma

A series of questions for the semi-structured interview (see the Appendix) was designed using a conceptual model, or checklist, to govern the choice of questions (Gummerson, 2000). This provided information on a number of areas which were then explored in the following sections:

- the interviewee's definition of success within the organisation and an understanding of the measures of that success. This section also looked at how this definition has changed for the interviewee since they began working in education;
- the management characteristics of each principal based on Hambrick and Mason's (1984) upper echelons theory;
- the interviewee's understanding of public relations and the role public relations could play in organisations. This section further explored the status and role public relations played within the interviewee's school and how decisions were made on the public relations approach and strategies conducted by the school; and
- the interviewee's perception of the environment. This section sought to find out how the organisation finds out about what's happening both internally and externally and then determine the managers' perception of that environment.

3.7.3 Interviews With the Principals

While the Principal will be the unit of analysis studied in schools as the most senior manager, the size and make-up of the top management team and School board will be investigated in terms of the potential influence these two groups may have on the principal's strategic choice and direction. Studies outlining the influence such groups have on managers' determination of strategy have therefore been included in Table 8 which combines Hambrick and Mason's (1984) original upper echelon

characteristics with other management characteristics most commonly identified in the literature.

Table 8.

Profile (Demographic Management Characteristics) of Principals

	Age		Tenure	Experience			Education	
School	Age	Age became Principal	Tenure/ 5-year Contract[a]	Years in education	Years as Principal	External/ Internal Appt.	Highest level of Education (UG/PG)	Type of quals. Bus/ Ed/Arts
GPS 1 Male	51	38	Contract	27 years	13 years	Ext.	PG	Education
GPS 2 Female	48	35-44	Contract	26 years	8 years	Int.	PG	Arts Ed. Admin.
GPS 3 Male	65	35-44	Contract	40+ years	20+ years	Ext.	UG	Economics Education
Ind 1 Male	53	23	Contract	32 years	30 years	Ext.	PG	Arts Ed Admin Ed Leadership Theology
Ind 2 Female	45-54	35-44	Contract	25 years	6 years (DH)	Int.	PG	Ed Leadership
Cath 1 Female	52	45	Contract	36 years	7 years	Ext.l	PG	Ed Leadership
Cath 2 Male	55-64	35-44	Contract	40+ years	20+ years	Ext.	UG	Education
State 1 Male	55-64	35-44	Tenure	40+ yrs	20+ years	Ext.	UG	Arts Education
State 2 Male	35-44	35-44	Tenure	22 years	11 years	Ext.	PG	Education Management Science
State 3 Male	45-54	35	Tenure	29 years	8 years (AH)	Ext.	UG	Education

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

[a] All contracts were five year fixed contracts.

3.7.4 Interview Pilot

Piloting questionnaires for an interview is essential to assess the adequacy of the research design and the instruments to be used for data collection (M. Wilson & Sapsford, 2006). The interviewer conducted one interview prior to the commencement of this study, with a state school principal, to test the structure of the questionnaire, the types of questions, and the terminology used in each question within the interview proforma. This interview proved to be somewhat repetitive, with

the interviewer needing to explain a number of terms included in many of the questions. Based on this pilot, the interviewer used the interviewee's responses to simplify the proforma, and group questions into each area of the literature, rather than trying to cover each of these areas repeatedly across a number of areas of the environment. In addition, in the pilot it was found that this principal did not understand much of the terminology used and the questions were refined to include "everyday" terminology that principals could speak to more easily.

3.7.5 Interview Transcripts

To obtain an accurate representation of respondents' views, all interviews were recorded using a digital tape recorder. This allows for a more accurate portrayal of evidence, and more accurate referencing to interviews, giving the researcher a greater level of reliability as the data is less likely to be misrepresented. All recordings were transcribed to paper, verbatim, to give a physical and accurate account of each interview, thus highlighting applicable issues, identifying key themes and minimising bias (Patton, 2002).

3.7.6 Data Analysis of Interviews

Many interpretivist researchers such as Schwandt (1990) take the position that there is no "fact of the matter" and suggest that it is not really possible to specify criteria for good qualitative work (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In qualitative data analysis the role of the researcher is to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon being studied by placing the raw data into categories and manipulating the data to identify key patterns and themes (Neuman, 2003). As a qualitative study, the focus is on words rather than numbers (Miles & Huberman) with the words being derived from in-depth interviews. The analysis of the interview transcripts follows Miles and Huberman's data analysis techniques of data reduction, data display, drawing conclusions and verification as follows:

Data reduction

After rereading all 10 interview transcripts several times, the researcher broke down each transcript into possible themes and patterns, such as significant words, sentences and phrases, which best describe participants' understanding of their

changing environment, and their motives and attitudes in response to that changing environment. This is referred to as *coding* and is an important step in data analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Data display

This step in the analysis involved the development of categories and the identification of key trends, themes and sub-themes found in the data. For this study, the researcher began by organising the verbatim responses to each question into tables across each participant. The data in each table was then reduced to key themes, words and phrases taken from the responses of each question to clearly show consistent themes that appeared across the responses, and variations to these themes that also appeared from some respondents.

Drawing conclusions

With the data reduced and displayed in a systematic way, the next step was to analyse the grouped themes across various categories. For example, management characteristics were integrated into tabulated responses on how respondents define success, how they make decisions, how public relations is viewed, and used, in their organisation, and how they monitor their environment. The aim of this part of the process was to look for similarities and common patterns amongst the data.

Verification

This is the final step in analysing the interview data which requires reviewing the original transcripts, to recheck and verify the strength of interpretations that have been made in each stage of the data analysis.

3.7.7 Researcher Bias

Unlike surveys where each respondent answers the same question in the same way, semistructured interviews will tend to obtain a broader range of responses. The researcher's role is to interpret themes and patterns emerging from the interview transcripts, and because of the subjective interpretation required the outcome may lead to researcher bias. This occurs when the researcher influences each participant's responses during the interview forcing desired patterns to emerge. These limitations

were avoided by the use of core questions as a basis for each interview, and limiting the researcher's involvement to asking questions only, rather than making comment.

Finally, as this is a qualitative, exploratory study, generalisability will be limited due to the small number of participants used to collect data. Also noteworthy is that three of the 10 participants were female which limits understanding of gender as a management characteristic. This, however, should not affect other components of the study as all other sampling criteria were followed, and seeking an even number of female participants at the expense of reducing the maximum variation of other characteristics within the sampling frame would have reduced the breadth of findings in relation to the research questions and the literature. The overall sample size of 10 participants is consistent with other qualitative studies.

All research methods have some form of limitation and criticism, and this study is no different. What is essential to the reliability of this study is that limitations have been sufficiently addressed.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

The research process used in this study was subject to the ethical clearance guidelines set down by Queensland University of Technology (QUT). Under QUTs Human Research Ethics guidelines, participants were provided with an information package, and consent form, which required that neither the organisation nor any individual would be identified either in the sampling data or throughout the research findings. This has resulted in limiting the description of some of the study sites to ensure they cannot be identified from the information provided.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the methodology adopted in this study. Data on the school environment is presented in Chapter Four. Data on the managers' characteristics and use of public relations strategies is presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FOUR
Background

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a context for schools in Queensland by describing the operating environment they exist in, and the governing bodies they work under. This was drawn from a range of reports and so forth. Firstly, I explore the background of education in Australia, and the history of political, social, economic and technological changes that have impacted on the evolution of schools in Queensland. This chapter then goes on to provide a background of education in Queensland and the key governing bodies of state, Catholic, GPS and other independent schools in this study. Finally, this chapter looks at enrolment trends in each of these sectors, and existing data on what parents look for when they choose a school for their child(ren).

4.1 Background of Education in Australia

Australian schools have always been divided into three categories based on sources of funding and administrative structures – public schools (also known as government or state schools), GPS and other independent schools (also known as private schools) and Catholic schools. Government schools are run by State governments. While they are free to students, ”selective” government schools can be highly competitive with high academic, sporting or cultural entrance requirements for students outside a specific catchment area, as opposed to ”open” government schools who will take any students. The private sector can also be broken down in many ways. Education in all Australian States follows a three-tier model of primary education (primary schools – Years 1 - 7), secondary education (secondary or ”high” schools – Years 8 - 12) and tertiary education (universities and TAFE [Technical and Further Education] colleges). While schools work within this framework, a number of Australian schools (both public and private) offer P-12 (Prep to Year 12) encompassing the preprimary preparatory year with the primary and secondary levels of education. Further, many secondary schools offer introductory tertiary subjects with Vocational Education and the International Baccalaureate programs.

Government schools educate about two-thirds of Australian students with the other third in independent schools, although the proportion of students in the independent sector has been rising and continues to rise in many parts of Australia. The following section outlines the history of the political, social, economic and technological environment and how shifts in each of these factors have created a highly competitive and ever-changing environment that Australian schools now operate within.

4.2 History of Education in Australia

4.2.1 Political Environment

From Australia's early beginnings, through to the first half of the twentieth century, education was controlled at a state level with little involvement from the federal government. In the second half of the nineteenth century, legislation was passed in each of the colonies to abolish government assistance to schools that were not under government control, and to provide free, compulsory and secular elementary education for all children in schools operated by the State. By the early 1960s, however, things began to change with a number of major shifts in policy and landmark developments occurring at a federal level, often coinciding with changes in government (Wilkinson, Caldwell, Selleck, Harris, & Dettman, 2007). More than 40 years later, 20 different nongovernment school systems exist, with Catholic schools making up the largest system of nongovernment schools in Australia.

The States Grants (Science Laboratories and Technical Training) Act 1964 marked a significant turning point in the history of federal aid in Australia when it was assented to on 21 May 1964. The introduction of this Act was in response to the crisis in education, following the Second World War, with many accepting the need for the federal government to inject some badly needed funds into scientific and technological education in the post-Sputnik era, to upgrade significantly outdated science laboratories and facilities in secondary schools. This was the first time the federal government had provided funding to state secondary schools and was the first reintroduction of funding to nongovernment schools since the late-1800s. It opened the door for the acceptance of further grants, such as the capital grants for secondary

school libraries, which were announced in the 1968 Budget. Queensland led the way in providing the first per pupil (per capita) grants for nongovernment school children in Australia when the scholarship scheme for secondary school students was made non-competitive in 1964, and the grants were paid directly to schools. By the late-1960s, the federal government was providing limited school funding in a number of ways until the introduction of the first general assistance scheme (recurrent grants) for nongovernment schools saw the federal funding increase significantly by the early-1970s (see Table 9). General recurrent grants assist schools with ongoing operating expenses such as teaching and support staff salaries (Independent Schools Council of Australia [ISCA], 2007a). Following a departmental investigation into the needs of nongovernment schools across Australia, per capita grants of $35 per primary student and $50 per secondary student were implemented from the beginning of 1970 with grants totalling more than $24.2 million during the first full year of the scheme in the 1970-71 financial year.

In December 1971, the federal Coalition government announced it would increase direct federal assistance to schools to around $80 million per annum, of which approximately $60 million would go to nongovernment schools. In 1972, the Minister for Education and Science, Malcolm Fraser, then proposed further increasing funding to nongovernment schools, as well as creating a percentage nexus between funding for nongovernment schools and the cost of educating children in the government sector. The nondiscriminatory nature of the per capita grants scheme was consistent with the Liberal philosophy of encouraging excellence in education as well as preventing nongovernment schools from becoming elitist institutions which denied entry to a wide sector of the population on financial grounds. They were also much simpler to administer as the only data required were enrolment figures.

The Australian Labor Party (ALP) also supported freedom of choice in education, proposing a generously funded Schools Commission which would assess the needs of all Australian schools and allocate federal money accordingly. With a clear, long-term plan for Australian schools, the election of an ALP Government in 1972, for the first

Table 9.

Aid to Nongovernment Schools 1964 – 1974

Year	Grant Scheme	Total : $('000)
1964-65	Capital Grants for Science Laboratories	2,667
1965-66	Capital Grants for Science Laboratories	2,667
1966-67	Capital Grants for Science Laboratories	2,667
1967-68	Capital Grants for Science Laboratories	5,337
1968-69	Capital Grants for Science Laboratories	5,337
1969-70	Capital Grants for Science Laboratories	5.337
	Capital Grants for Secondary School Libraries	3,003
	General Recurrent Grants	12,117
	Total Grants	**20,517**
1970-71	Capital Grants for Science Laboratories	5,337
	Capital Grants for Secondary School Libraries	2.918
	General Recurrent Grants	24,253
	Total Grants	**32,508**
1971-72	Capital Grants for Science Laboratories	4,301
	Capital Grants for Secondary School Libraries	2,341
	General Recurrent Grants	29,594
	Total Grants	**36,236**
1972-73	Capital Grants for Science Laboratories	4,301
	Capital Grants for Secondary School Libraries	2,475
	General Recurrent Grants	40,979
	Total Grants	**47,755**
1973-74	Capital Grants for Science Laboratories	3,901
	Capital Grants for Secondary School Libraries	2,844
	General Recurrent Grants	54,361
	Capital Grants – General	8,171
	Grants for Disadvantaged Schools	184
	Grants for Schools for the Handicapped	702
	Total Grants	**70,163**

Note. From Wilkinson et al. (2007)

time in nearly a quarter of a century, promised to provide a revolution in the way school funding was carried out in Australia. According to the new Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam, national responsibility for education funding at all levels, and the availability of free and equal education at all levels, and for all educational institutions, government and nongovernment, were the two educational principles he had fought for during his Parliamentary career. In his first speech to the House of Representatives in 1953, Gough Whitlam announced his belief that the Commonwealth would gradually take over the role of funding education from the

States. As far as the ALP was concerned, education was to be the great vehicle for social change in the future. Within 11 days of being elected, Mr Whitlam established an Interim Committee of the proposed Australian Schools Commission. Four arguments for government assistance to nongovernment schools identified by the Committee were:

1. The community saves money because it is cheaper to provide state aid than to pay the full cost of educating all children in the government system.
2. Parents who pay taxes, but choose to send their children to nongovernment schools, deserve some educational subsidy.
3. The existence of nongovernment schools encourages diversity and experimentation.
4. State aid could be used to ensure that all conditions, in which any child is educated, do not fall below a certain minimum standard.

The recommendations of the Interim Committee were to be implemented via two Acts – the *Schools Commission Act* 1973, which led to the establishment of the Schools Commission as a statutory body on 1 January 1974; and the *States Grants (Schools) Act,* 1976*,* to provide basic per capita grants and special purpose funding to the States for seven programs recommended by the committee. By the time the Whitlam Government was dismissed in 1975, it had provided increased funding for virtually every aspect of education. This was further increased with the election of the Coalition (Fraser) Government in 1975, which adopted a recurrent funding policy providing a "basic" per capita grant for all children in nongovernment schools, and supplemented this with additional funds granted on the basis of "need". It also reintroduced the nexus funding which linked basic per capita entitlements of nongovernment schools with the cost of maintaining pupils in government schools. This nexus provided the first step in the Government's policy of increasing the basic per pupil grant (to nongovernment schools) to 20% of the running costs per pupil in government schools. This nexus funding and the additional needs-based funding for capital expenditure in nongovernment schools, continued to skew the distribution of funds, from the Schools Commission to the private sector, as enrolments began to rise in nongovernment schools. During its term, the Fraser Government further sought to create a clear delineation of the functions between the State and Federal government through the Federalism Policy with a reassertion of the States'

responsibility in education. Under this policy, the federal government increased its funding to nongovernment schools while decreasing its funding to government schools with the 70.2% of funding to government schools in 1974-75 decreasing to 51.9% by 1981-82. This reduced expenditure on government schools was justified based on the increased tax positions of the States and the expectation that total enrolments in government schools would begin to fall in most States from 1978. Further, the bulk of the funds received by government schools came directly from State governments, while the amount of money provided to nongovernment schools by the States was small.

The aim of the ALP when it returned to power, under Bob Hawke in 1983, was to ensure that government schools received greater Commonwealth support and that funds for nongovernment schools were directed to those schools that needed them most. Two priorities of note under this needs-based funding included increasing public confidence in government schools, and providing better planning and improved coordination in the development of new nongovernment schools under the ”New Schools Policy”. The policy was implemented in 1985 to maintain educational standards in new nongovernment schools as well as to control the continued growth of the nongovernment sector. Up until this point, there had been generous funding for new schools through special establishment grants and per capita funding at the highest levels available to establish nongovernment schools in developing areas. Between 1982 and 1986 there had been steady growth in the proportion of Australian students enrolled in nongovernment schools, and between 1974 and 1985, a total of 345 new nongovernment schools had been established. During this period, the number of small, low-fee, non-Catholic and non-Anglican schools had doubled from 341 to 692. Enrolment projections included in the Schools Commission’s 1984 report indicated that the level of enrolments in nongovernment schools was anticipated to rise by almost 25% between 1982 and 1987. Apart from needing to demonstrate adequate programs, and the reasonable prospect of their long-term viability, new schools proposing to open in established areas needed to demonstrate that they would not have a ”significant” negative impact on existing government and nongovernment schools. While Catholic Schools authorities were unhappy about the new restrictions of the policy, a number of existing nongovernment schools supported the policy, as it offered them some protection from competition, with many existing schools

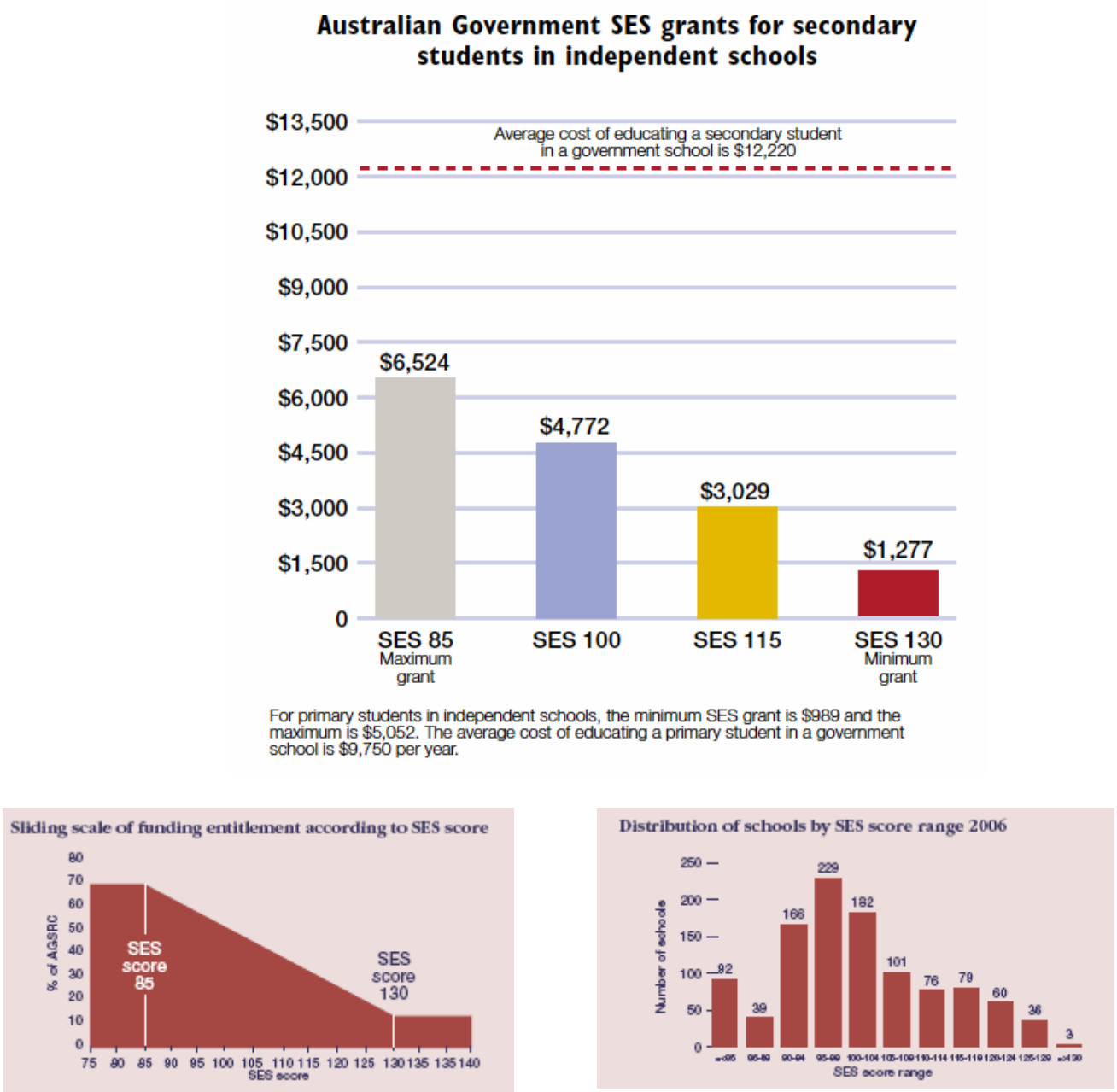
concerned that the proliferation of new schools was threatening their viability. While the New Schools Policy was in place between 1986 and 1995, 251 new nongovernment schools were opened in Australia. However, due to school closures and amalgamations, the total number of nongovernment schools grew by only 18 during this period (Wilkinson et al., 2007, p. 130).

In 1985, an "historic settlement" saw all nongovernment schools and systems placed in one of 12 funding categories on the basis of "need" according to the Education Resources Index (ERI). Soon after the 1987 federal election, the Schools Commission was abolished, with Prime Minister Hawke announcing a major restructure with the creation of 16 new "mega" departments, including the new Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) (Wilkinson et al., 2007, p. 132). The Hawke government accepted a recommendation by the Quality of Education Review Committee (QERC) for recurrent grants for schools to be based on agreements negotiated between the Commonwealth and States for government schools, and the Commonwealth and nongovernment school authorities for nongovernments schools based on "resource agreements" with both state education and nongovernment school authorities. Prime Minister Hawke now believed the funding issue had been settled and moved on to focus on curriculum and ongoing training opportunities to help young people find a place in the workforce, a push that was continued with the future Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating's proposed One Nation initiatives in 1992. This changed the focus on funding by making nongovernment schools, and system authorities, fulfil accountability obligations for Commonwealth funding.

With the Coalition's return to power in 1996 came further change, with the abolition of the New Schools Policy, and Labor's funding cap for new and nongovernment schools, under the premise that these measures restricted educational choice. The rapid changes in computer technology and an increasing number of students completing Years 11 and 12 also led to promises of a 10% increase to Commonwealth Capital Grants to nongovernment schools. One of the most controversial initiatives, of the Coalition Government under John Howard, was the inclusion of the Enrolment Benchmark Adjustment (EBA) in the 1996 Budget. The policy was developed in response to the drift of students from government to

nongovernment schools – State governments would have their allocation reduced for any reduction in the proportion of students attending government schools. The rationale behind the policy was that when students move from government to nongovernment schools, there is a cost saving to the relevant State government. While supporters of the policy argued that the EBA gives "public education systems the incentive to retain their students" (Wilkinson et al., 2007, p. 171), there was obvious resistance from State governments and government schools. To offset this, the Howard (Coalition) Government provided an incentive for State governments to retrieve the funds lost through the EBA by developing a strategic plan to back up the Government's Backing Australia's Ability (BAA) policy of "Fostering Science, Mathematical and Technological Skills and Innovation in Government Schools" (Wilkinson et al.).

Another significant shift under this government was the review and subsequent change from Labor's ERI funding model to a needs-based, socio-economic status (SES) model which would provide more transparency, predictability, simplicity and flexibility for schools. The major concern with the ERI model was that it discouraged private investment in education, as any significant private investment led to a reduction in government subsidies. The SES model did not link private investment to funding, instead assessing the financial needs of a school based on the educational needs of its students after socio-economic status was shown to be linked to levels of educational achievement. This form of funding is unique to Australia as it appears to be the only country that provides public funds to nongovernment schools, and places no limits on the amount of income schools can generate from fees and other sources. Figure 4 illustrates how SES grants are allocated to secondary students in independent schools with a sliding scale of funding entitlements to schools based on their SES score.



Source: ISCA, 2007b

Figure 4. Allocation of Australian Government SES grants for secondary students in Queensland independent schools

Accountability was again high on the agenda for the Coalition Government with the assent of the *States Grants (Primary and Secondary Education Assistance) Act* 2000, which required government and non-government school authorities to meet certain conditions before they were eligible to receive Commonwealth funding. Under the SES model, schools were required to:

1. Provide addresses of all students to the Commonwealth for their SES scores to be determined;
2. Commit to programs under the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century; and
3. Provide performance measures through participation in standardised literacy and numeracy testing for Years 3, 5 and 7 along with other standardised examinations for various groups and Year levels.

Since the advent of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) in 2000 which, while collected by the Federal Government, goes entirely to the State Governments, States have record levels of income to support their services. It is often cited in the general media that there is ongoing concern for the Federal Government, that State Governments are not delivering in terms of outcomes, with disparities in achievements in literacy and numeracy among different categories of students. To this end, conditions for funding were expanded in the *Schools Assistance (Learning Together – Achievement Through Choice and Opportunity) Act* 2004 which required schools to commit to a 10-point National Education Framework for Schools. Some of the requirements under this framework included:

1. Schools reports had to be produced in "plain language" and provided at least twice a year;
2. Display a 'Values for Australian Schooling' poster in a prominent place;
3. Implement a Safe Schools Framework to address bullying, child abuse, harassment and so forth.
4. All schools were required to have a functioning flagpole and fly the Australian flag;
5. Consistency in the starting age of children across all Australian schools;
6. All primary and secondary children must do a minimum of two hours of physical activity per week as part of the school curriculum;
7. National system for reporting student information between schools;

8. "Achieve performance targets and report against performance regulations specified in the regulation" (Wilkinson et al., 2007, p. 174);
9. Statements of Learning be developed and implemented with common testing standards in English, mathematics, science, civics, citizenship education and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to be in place before January, 2008; and
10. Require schools to provide their communities with information on 13 mandatory items under the three categories of Professional Engagement, Key Student Outcomes and Satisfaction.

In 2001, further assistance was given to new schools to restore funding to pre-1982 levels, when new schools received the highest level of Commonwealth funding in their first year of operation. Other grants that were established under this government included the:

- Short Term Emergency Assistance program.
- Specific Purpose Grants.
- Investing in Our Schools Programme.
- Boosting Innovation, Science, Mathematics and Technology Teaching.

The increased funding of private schools in Australia during the past 40 years has led to a parallel shift in enrolments. With the increase in enrolments, has come considerable growth in small, low-fee, Christian schools, especially after the abolition of the New Schools Policy in 1996 (Wilkinson et al., 2007, p. 268). Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) figures show that Australia is close to the top in the OECD in terms of the number of primary students in private education. This history illustrates how the funding of nongovernment schools has changed the education landscape, especially during the past 25 years when the outcomes of the first significant recurrent grants were introduced by the Whitlam Government in the early-1970s. While funding arrangements and policies have shifted, according to which party was in power, both parties were highly supportive of funding nongovernment schools to give Australians a choice in how to educate their child. The issue, however, is how the exercise of

choice should be supported with public funds, and in particular, where this leaves government schools that are losing market share in all states (Wilkinson et al., p. 181) note that many of the significant changes in funding nongovernment schools that took effect in the political arena, were brought about by broader changes in society which occurred throughout each decade "… given the view that politics is the art of the possible, some developments [in funding of non-government schools] were made possible because of societal change that allowed public acceptance of what in former times was clearly not possible" (Wilkinson et al., p. 181). The remainder of this analysis of the macroenvironment highlights some of those shifts in the social, economic and technological environments that have impacted on the operating environment schools are working in today.

4.2.2 Social environment

As evidenced by the previous section, the political environment has provided new opportunities for independent schools, through significantly increased funding, while also presenting new challenges through a substantial rise in government regulation of nongovernment schools that, together with state schools, now need to be more accountable for the funds they receive. The political environment is indicative of the social change Australia has undergone throughout the past century which has also presented significant opportunities and challenges. Currently, schools in Australia are responding to several major social pressures including a decline in the number of children being born, and an increase in parental and community expectations for choice, breadth and quality of schooling.

For around 80 years, politicians and most of the Australian community firmly believed that state aid to nongovernment schools was something that should not be contemplated. For the first half of the twentieth century, the determination of Irish Catholics to maintain their own schools for both religious and cultural reasons was a powerful force in the division of church and state and in creating the sectarian divide in every level of Australian society. The lack of opposition to the Federal Government's science grants in 1964 for nongovernment secondary schools, however, represented the first social shift in public attitudes towards government

assistance to nongovernment schools. Wilkinson et al. (2007, p. 181) attribute this shift to three developments:

1. The slow, but steady, breakdown in the sectarian divide.
2. The so-called "education crisis", which was created by population growth following the Second World War, and the growing trend for more Australian children to stay longer at school.
3. The split in the Labor Party and the subsequent emergence of the Catholic-dominated Democratic Labor Party as a significant force in Australian politics.

However, just as social changes impacted on politics, so too did politics impact on social changes. The provision of additional resources for education, by the Whitlam Government in the early-1970s, to reduce inequality in Australian society struck a chord with the majority of Australians who believed that school and university qualifications were the key to social mobility, and increased life choices for their children.

Government interference, and refusal to provide financial support which led to the Goulburn New South Wales Catholic schools closure in 1962, also impacted on social understanding and change, highlighting the plight of Catholic schools, and the fact that government schools alone did not have the capacity to educate all students. The need for additional toilets required in Our Lady of Mercy Catholic school in Goulburn was the first call for assistance by a nongovernment school for government funding. The school could not afford the new toilets and when the government refused to help, the Goulburn Catholic community made a decision to close all Catholic schools in Goulburn in protest. When the schools closed, 640 Catholic children were enrolled at primary and secondary schools with more than half of the children previously enrolled in Catholic schools without a school place. The protest received considerable hostile press coverage nationwide, however, despite the negative coverage, the incident helped reveal the plight of Catholic schools to the wider Australian community and demonstrated the depth of Catholic feeling on the issue of government funding. It also warned Australian governments of the immense financial burden they faced if the Catholic system collapsed and children currently enrolled in Catholic schools were forced into the government system.

As acceptance of Commonwealth funding to nongovernment schools grew, the debate shifted from one of church versus state to public versus private. Following the Goulburn incident a national lay body, the Australian Parents Council (APC) was formed and by the early-1970s had became a powerful and effective lobby group. Similarly, the Catholic Church steadily lobbied the federal government through the Federal Catholic Schools' Committee (FCSC) which was formed in 1967 in an effort to put badly needed funding back into Catholic Schools. While the Catholic system had survived reasonably well before the war, it was now struggling and facing potential collapse. The burden this would place on the government system was now recognised. Similarly, while provision of assistance to Catholic schools still concerned many Protestants, the make up of the population had changed and the sectarianism that had produced such social heat in the early twentieth century was starting to cool down. The political environment had also changed and the view that any politician advocating state aid was committing political suicide was being reconsidered.

Commonwealth funding of the nongovernment sector, however, was not without opposition, with the Australian Council for the Defence of Government Schools (DOGS) formed in 1964 in response to the Commonwealth's introduction of funding to nongovernment schools (Wilkinson et al., 2007, p. 92). DOGS acted as a powerful lobby group organising protests against state aid and challenged the validity of that aid in the High Court in a long running legal battle between 1971 and 1981. Further opponents of funding to nongovernment schools continue to be concerned with what they see is neglect of the government sector in terms of facilities, and the disparity of services and support for staff and students (Wilkinson et al., p. 183).

When considering social factors within Australian history, immigration must be considered as a key factor. Apart from the fact that Australia was founded as a penal colony, drawing convict families from England, the large influx of southern European Catholic families after the Second World War continued to add to Australia's diversity, while also putting pressure on Catholic education to cope with increasing numbers of students. The more recent push of Australia, in the 1980s and 1990s, as a multicultural society further broadened this diversity with Australia

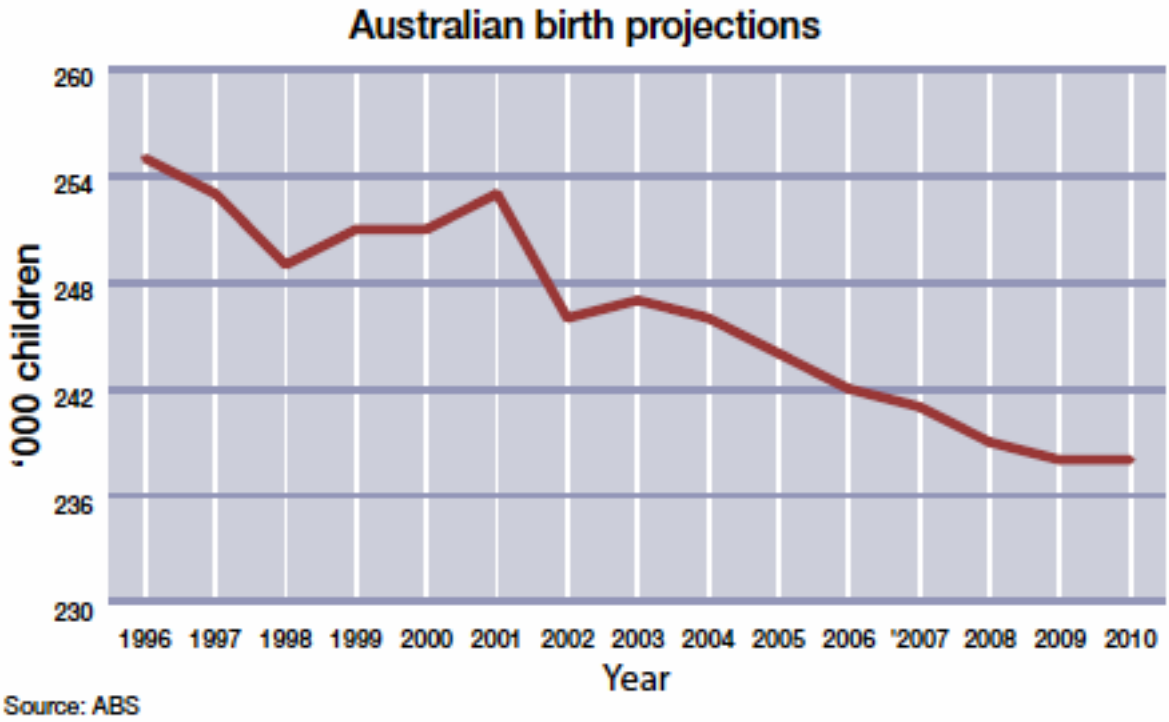
continuing to receive refugees from a wide variety of countries. Such diversity of ethnic origin combined with technologically and globally driven changes to our culture has created a cultural melting pot in schools, with an increased need to build intercultural skills into learning:

> The structure and character of the family is changing in ways that are unprecedented....Parents are older and working more….Teachers see signs of family disruption in students – anxiety, depression, lack of discipline, aggression, inadequate literacy outcomes and a greater need for adult role models. This places new pressure on schools and teachers to provide children with high levels of social support. (Queensland State Education 2010 [QSE], 2000, p. 4)

Such change has created the need for schools to develop new links with communities to rebuild "a new consensus". "Rapid change puts stress on the social fabric of communities, creating the need for schools to promote social cohesion, harmony and sense of community" (QSE 2010, 2000, p. 7). "Because human and social capital develop within families and through wider networks, Queensland state schools should be reconceptualised as part of that learning society and become embedded in communities – local and global – in new ways" (p. 8):

> Schools, in partnership with parents, have a social role that comes from the pursuit of the public interest, equity and their responsibility for the welfare of students. Schools are community assets, central to community learning and development. This is a multi-faceted relationship – shared with parents and community, cooperative with business, coordinated with other government and community services. (p. 18)

Australia's declining birth-rate has started to affect enrolments in all schools and has meant that the total school population in Australia has started to decline from 2008, and that growth rates in the independent school sector were expected to continue to slow down (ISCA, 2006b). As Figure 5 illustrates, Australia's birth rate has steadily declined since 2001 although in more recent trends have gone against these projections due to the Federal bonuses paid on the birth of children in recent years. Despite this trend, the Australian Bureau of Statistics' predictions (available at the time of writing) indicated that the Australian school population would start to decline once again from 2009 based on a decline in 2008.



Source: ISCA, 2006b)

Figure 5. Projections of Australia's declining birth rate

4.2.3 Economic environment

Education remained a priority in the late-1960s and early-1970s with the growing affluence of the Australian community ensuring more children remained at school beyond the compulsory attendance age. In addition to growing student numbers (particularly in the senior secondary years), high inflation increased education costs. High inflation also provided increased taxation revenue for the Federal Government which put more pressure on the Federal to increase spending on education rather than the less affluent States.

Australia faced an economic crisis in the mid-1980s – which probably led to a shift in parents choosing newer independent schools over the more traditional, elite,

GPS schools. Further, with the increased cost of living along with change in families, it is estimated that 18% of Queensland families are below the poverty line and account for 25% of children attending schools (QSE 2010, 2000, p. 6).

The Queensland Government's QSE 2010 (2000) document identifies further economic trends impacting on education stemming from the movement away from Australia's traditional areas of employment like manufacturing, agriculture and resource development to communication, service and knowledge based industries. This shift has led to an increase in the number of professional and skilled jobs, and a decrease in unskilled jobs, thus requiring qualifications and skills to gain employment.

4.2.4 Technological environment

While funding developments in the political environment illustrate the significant impact technology has had in education from a curriculum perspective, technology has also significantly impacted on schools in terms of how they have positioned themselves, and communicate with a variety of key audiences.

In addition, the Federal Government's increased focus on accountability that has emerged during the past decade would not have been possible in earlier decades simply because there was not the technology to track funds, or to measure and report outcomes.

4.3 Background of Education in Queensland

The history of education in Queensland is representative of the national trends with the first school opened in Queensland in 1826, being privately run by a soldier's wife and administered by the Anglican Church. The *Education Act* 1860, established a Board of General Education, however, due to a vastly scattered population and a limited education budget, it was not until the *State Education Act* 1875, that made education available to all children from 6 – 12 years of age. Under this Act, primary education for children from 6 to 12 years of age was to be compulsory and free; education was to be secular; and a Department of Public Instruction was established to administer the Act. The rapid social change in the late-1950s and early-1960s led

to the establishment of free secondary education for all children and the establishment of The Department of Education. Until that point, secondary education was only available to those who received a scholarship on completion of primary school through the *Grammar Schools Act* 1975, which allowed for the establishment of a grammar school in any town where at least £1000 could be raised locally. Between 1863 and 1892, 10 grammar schools were opened until a ”superior” state secondary school system was established for ”qualified” students. It was not until 1912 that free secondary schools, attached to primary schools, were opened in six Queensland towns, growing to 37 State high schools and 34 secondary departments attached to primary schools in Queensland in 1957.

By 1980, the number of State secondary schools in Queensland had tripled to 135 high schools and 68 secondary departments, while enrolments increased to 105,427. In the same period, Queensland's population increased from 1,392,384 to an estimated 2,213,000. In 1989, the Department of Education's first strategic plan was adopted. Since then, a range of other strategic documents have been produced including the QSE 2010, a ten year plan for education in Queensland.

4.3.1 Education Queensland

In 1996, the Department of Education was renamed Education Queensland, a division of the Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts. According to the QSE 2010 document produced by Education Queensland in 2000, Education Queensland “has responsibility for the outcomes achieved for all students with State Government funding. This guides relationships with the nongovernment school sector, statutory authorities, postschool educational institutions and other government departments” (p. 26).

In its QSE 2010 document, Education Queensland stated, “Above all there is a need for a redefinition of the purpose of public education that meets the unique challenge posed by the transition to a globalised economy and society.” (p. 8). This document focuses on three distinct areas including the structure, workforce and leadership of state schools to cope with the increasingly competitive market they operate in. The outcome of this shift has redefined the structure of schools as

complex administrative units, with the need for professional skills in marketing, resource management, accountability and business functions to support their educational role. The QSE document defines the school workforce as the essence of the value of state schools:

> Parents want educational leadership from principals and value competent and dedicated teachers… Business skills are needed in the workforce for schools to manage their affairs and marketing... Professionals are required to support their social role and be part of the learning program. (p. 20)

It further goes on to reinforce that as managers of schools, principals need business and administrative support to assist them in this role. "Leadership is about promoting innovation and responding to community need. It is also about promoting learning and state education in the community. Principals, supported by teachers, have educational leadership as their primary role" (QSE 2010, 2000, p. 20).

Marketing objectives for state schools, outlined on p. 25 of the QSE 2010 document, are based on 'market research that provides the base data for a marketing strategy to:

- Increase Education Queensland's share of school enrolments.
- Increase completion rates in schools.
- Enhance the image of teaching and the public perception of teachers.
- Promote schools as essential to communities and their development.
- Ensure state school education is seen as meaningful, relevant to student needs and aligned to their future life choices.
- Educate the public on the value of the *New Basics*.
- Manage an overall strategy that both develops system-wide marketing and provides expertise for district and school-level'.

The initiatives of the Queensland State Government very much reflect the policies put in place by the Howard Government from 1996. While funding arrangements and policy continued to shift at a federal level, each State took their own course in education.

With the introduction of the Howard Government's incentive for State governments to retrieve the funds lost through the EBA by developing a strategic plan to back up the Government's Backing Australia's Ability (BAA) policy of "Fostering Science, Mathematical and Technological Skills and Innovation in Government Schools", Education Queensland developed QSE 2010.

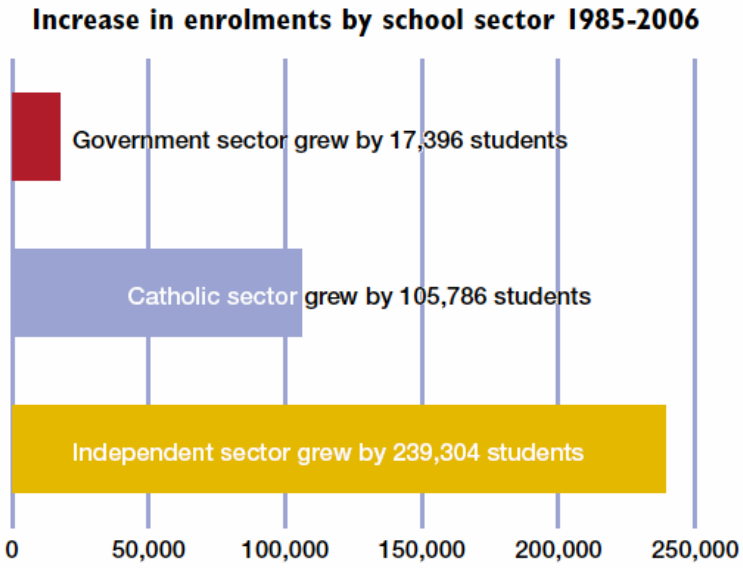
One of the initiatives under the BAA policy was the Boosting Innovation, Science, Mathematics and Technology Teaching (BISTMT) program to strengthen science, mathematics and technology education in schools and build a long-term culture of innovation in Australian schools by attracting more students to continue onto science, mathematics and technology teaching.

Also produced was a White Paper on Queensland the Smart State – Education and Training Reforms for the Future focusing on increasing the completion rates of Year 10 students going onto senior, providing more options and flexibility for young people, building community partnerships with development of strategies for the early and middle years of schooling (Education Queensland, 2002).

Regardless of whether a school is public or private, it is regulated by the same curriculum standards framework determined by Education Queensland.

4.3.2 Independent schools

As Figure 6 illustrates, the independent sector is the fastest-growing schools sector in Australia (ISCA, 2007a). While traditionally known as prestigious private schools often with a religious affiliation, independent schools in Queensland have taken on a much broader role since the 1980s with a significant increase in the number of low-fee schools (and in some cases without any religious affiliation) catering for "average"' Australians.



Source: ISCA, 2007c

Figure 6. Increase in enrolments by school sector in Queensland schools - 1985 - 2006

The Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA) is a national body representing independent schools including lobbying government and acting as a resource to independent schools and parents by reporting government funding and policy development, enrolment figures and curriculum changes. As outlined in ISCAs annual review for 2006-07 (ISCA, 2007a), "… government agencies need constant reminding that the [independent] sector is not systemically organised and it is individual schools and their communities that bear the full administrative burden and cost of any policy changes" (p. 2). The Queensland member body for ISCA is the Independent Schools Queensland (ISQ - formerly known as the Association of Independent Schools Queensland) which performs a similar function on a state level as reflected by its mission statement – "To provide representational, promotional and advocacy services for member schools to enhance the profile of, and strengthen the educational outcomes delivered by Independent schools of Queensland" (ISQ, 2007). On its home page, ISQ (2007) refers to diversity as being one of the distinguishing features of independent schools in Queensland from large to small schools, single sex

to coeducational, new schools to schools with long histories and traditions and from schools that charge fees of $500 a year to those which charge in excess of $20,000 per year**.** The diversity of Independent Schools in Queensland is best illustrated by Figure 7.

Affiliation	Schools	Students	% of Students
Anglican	152	128,109	25.6
Nondenominational	179	64,941	13.0
Roman Catholic	71	49,997	10.0
Uniting Church in Australia	43	46,679	9.3
Christian Schools	125	43,841	8.8
Lutheran	83	32,133	6.4
Interdenominational	27	17,779	3.5
Baptist	43	16,269	3.2
Islamic	30	15,874	3.2
Seventh Day Adventist	56	10,110	2.0
Presbyterian	14	9,572	1.9
Jewish	19	9,038	1.8
Steiner	44	7,215	1.4
Pentecostal	19	6,746	1.3
Assemblies of God	16	6,370	1.3
Brethren	10	4,736	0.9
Greek Orthodox	8	4,112	0.8
Montessori	36	3,593	0.7
Other Catholic	7	3,421	0.7
Other Orthodox	6	1,970	0.4
Society of Friends (Quaker)	1	1,219	0.2
Churches of Christ	2	770	0.2
Ananda Marga	2	219	0.0
Hare Krishna	1	48	0.0
Other religious affiliation	6	2,032	0.4
Other*	85	14,231	2.8

*Other includes special schools, international schools, Indigenous schools, and community schools.

Source: ISCA, 2007b

Figure 7. Types of independent schools (systems) in Queensland

The one thing common to all independent schools is the autonomous governance arrangement which the Independent Schools Council of Australia believes underpins the sector's diversity. Most independent schools are governed on an individual school basis, however some schools share common aims and educational philosophies and are governed and administered as systems ISCA, 2006b). ISCA states that this autonomy and self management is a key to the success of independent schools as principals and school boards have the flexibility to be responsive to the communities they operate in and change in their overall operating environment. This autonomy, however, also requires a greater deal of accountability for independent schools as they must also answer to key stakeholders, such as parents and other members of the school community, as much as meeting state and Federal Government requirements.

Catholic schools, which are usually more accessible with lower fees, also make up a sizable proportion of Australian independent schools, and are usually regarded as a school sector of their own within the broad category of independent schools. According to ISCAs Year in Review for 2006-2007 (ISCA, 2007a), the independent sector's share of enrolments in 2006 was 13.1% with the sector accounting for 10.3% of primary enrolments, 16.8% of secondary enrolments and 18.3% of senior secondary enrolments. When combined with Catholic schools, the nongovernment sector as a whole accounts for 40% of senior secondary enrolments in Australia.

Independent schools can be further categorised in a number of ways – the elite Grammar Schools, religious systemic schools and so forth. In Queensland, one way of categorising independent schools is by the Associations they belong to which have been established on the basis of sporting competition. All of the more established independent schools in the greater Brisbane area belong to such associations as the Great Public Schools (GPS), Queensland Girls' Secondary Schools Sports Association (QGSSSA), The Associated Schools (TAS) and Associated Independent Colleges (AIC). While based on sporting and cultural activities, these associations also represent a level of status each of the member schools hold and in most cases, the level of fees each of the schools charge. Each Association includes a blend of religious denominations (Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran and Uniting Church/Presbyterian), while the most elite of these, the GPS and QGSSSA competitions include each of the nondenominational Grammar Schools in the greater Brisbane area. These two associations are discussed further.

4.3.3 Great Public Schools (GPS) Association

The GPS Association of Queensland was established in 1918 and represents some of the oldest, traditional and elite schools in Queensland from Queensland's first secondary school, Ipswich Grammar School, established in 1863; to its last appointed member school, Brisbane State High School (BSHS) which was established in 1921. BSHS is the only government schools in the GPS competition as it was the largest secondary school in Brisbane in the early 1900s. It is one of Queensland's few

”selective” state high schools with students outside BSHS’ catchment area needing to demonstrate outstanding sporting and/or cultural abilities to gain a place at the school. Under the SES funding scheme, most GPS schools receive less government funding and therefore charge higher tuition fees, with the exception of BSHS and some of the schools in areas outside Brisbane which do not attract such a high SES rating.

While the term “Public” may cause confusion in Australia for an organisation representing some of Queensland’s most elite private schools, public in this context stems from its use in England, Wales and Northern Ireland where the more prestigious independent schools are known as public schools. In Queensland, this prestige is determined by superior sporting and cultural performance and facilities with the GPS Association of Queensland representing nine member boys’ secondary schools. This prestige is represented by the famous alumni (known as ”the old school tie” network) of GPS schools who have excelled at a state and national level in a range of sports, especially rugby union. All GPS schools are boarding schools with the exception of BSHS and St Joseph’s College, Gregory Terrace (Terrace) which is one of the two Catholic schools in the GPS ranks. A third Catholic school, St Laurence’s College, was compelled to leave the Association in the 1920s due to the fact that it did not have a turf wicket and a football oval.

4.3.4 Queensland Girls’ Secondary Schools Sports Association

The QGSSSA, the girls’ equivalent of the GPS Association in Queensland, was established in 1908 with three member schools – Brisbane Girls’ Grammar School, St. Margaret’s Anglican Girls School and Somerville House. Membership grew to include 10 of Brisbane’s oldest and most exclusive girls’ schools with the exception of Brisbane State High School (BSHS) and St. Peter’s Lutheran College a coeducational school which was admitted into the QGSSSA competition in 1946. Like the GPS Association of Queensland, QGSSSA includes all of the boarding schools in the greater Brisbane area, with six of the member schools featuring boarding facilities.

4.3.5 Catholic Schools

The Catholic church has played a very active role in lobbying state and federal government right throughout Australia's history as political trends (and resulting funding or lack thereof), historical events (Second World War) and social change have impacted on the viability of Catholic schools. Such lobbying efforts are made on a number of levels within the church including the National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) at a national level, and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) at a state level. In conjunction with the QCEC, the State Federation of Parents and Friends Associations have been very influential in shaping government response to Catholic school requests for funding. Each of these organisations utilise the full weight of the Catholic network of church parishes and families through websites, church newspapers such as *The Catholic Leader*, school newsletters and so forth, to apply pressure to governments. This was evident when SES funding was first introduced and Catholic schools, many of which have struggled since the Second World War, were given their own set of funding arrangements to ensure they would not suffer from the new funding arrangements. Currently, approximately 80% of funding for Catholic schools comes from the government.

Catholic schools account for approximately 18% of the entire school population in Queensland and are administered in each state by an overseeing body called Catholic Education. In the archdiocese of Brisbane there are more than 137 schools administered by Catholic Education including 107 parish schools which are the responsibility of parishes; and 29 Archdiocesan schools which are the canonical responsibility of the Archbishop. Of these, 101 are primary schools (including 97 parish schools), and 23 are secondary schools (18 of these are Archdiocesan schools). A further eight are P-12 schools. Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE) provides support for new schools, small schools and schools with declining enrolments through a method of cross subsidisation among member schools. It is estimated that half of the 132 schools in BCEs jurisdiction, would not be viable on a "stand alone" basis and their survival is based on being subsidised by the remainder of the BCE school community. Another group of Catholic schools which are not administered by Catholic Education, are the Religious Institute schools which are

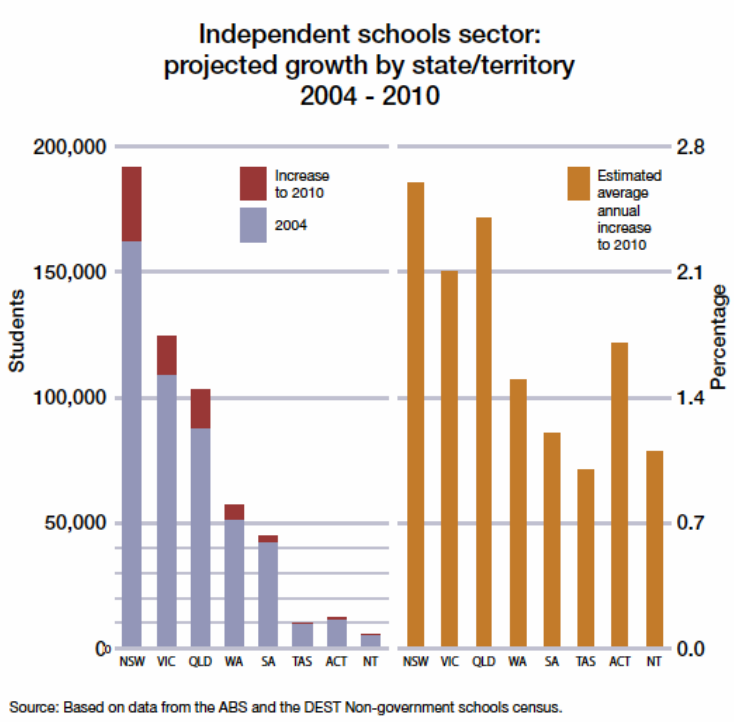
directly administered by institutes. There are 20 of these in the greater Brisbane area including one primary, 11 secondary and eight primary/secondary schools. Since 2002, ten new Catholic schools have opened in Brisbane and surrounding areas in response to local and State Government policies, population growth and settlement patterns in establishing areas, and infrastructure and land development within the Archdiocese.

All policies regarding Catholic education are developed, regulated and overseen by the Archbishop who delegates authority for the administration and management of Catholic education in the Archdiocese of Brisbane to the Executive Director of Brisbane Catholic Education (BCE). BCE operates as the executive arm of the Catholic Education Council in implementing policies under the authority of the Executive Director of BCE.

4.4 Enrolment Trends in Queensland Schools

The slowing of growth in the independent sector follows a long period of strong and steady increases in student enrolment with a national average annual growth rate of 3.4% from 1996 – 2004. Growth was experienced in all states with independent schools in Western Australia, Queensland and New South Wales experiencing the highest rates of growth at 4.2%, 4.1% and 3.5% average annual growth respectively (Independent Schools Council of Australia, 2005).

Within the sector, smaller schools with less than 250 students led the sector's growth between 1996 and 2004 with an average annual growth of 7.9% (31% of the sector's total enrolment growth). This group was led by small, low-fee Anglican schools with an average annual growth rate of 25% particularly in New South Wales and Queensland. Established schools of between 500-1000 students also experienced similar average annual growth rates as smaller schools, however, the sector's largest schools (1,000 or more students) have experienced an average growth of 1.5% (16% of the sector's total growth) (ISCA, 2005).



Source: ISCA, 2007b

Figure 8. Independent schools sector: projected growth by State/Territory 2004 – 2010

During the past 20 years, the growth of the independent sector was more than double that of the Catholic schools sector and nearly 14 times that of the government sector (L. Wilson, 2007 as cited in Wilkinson ISQ, 2008).

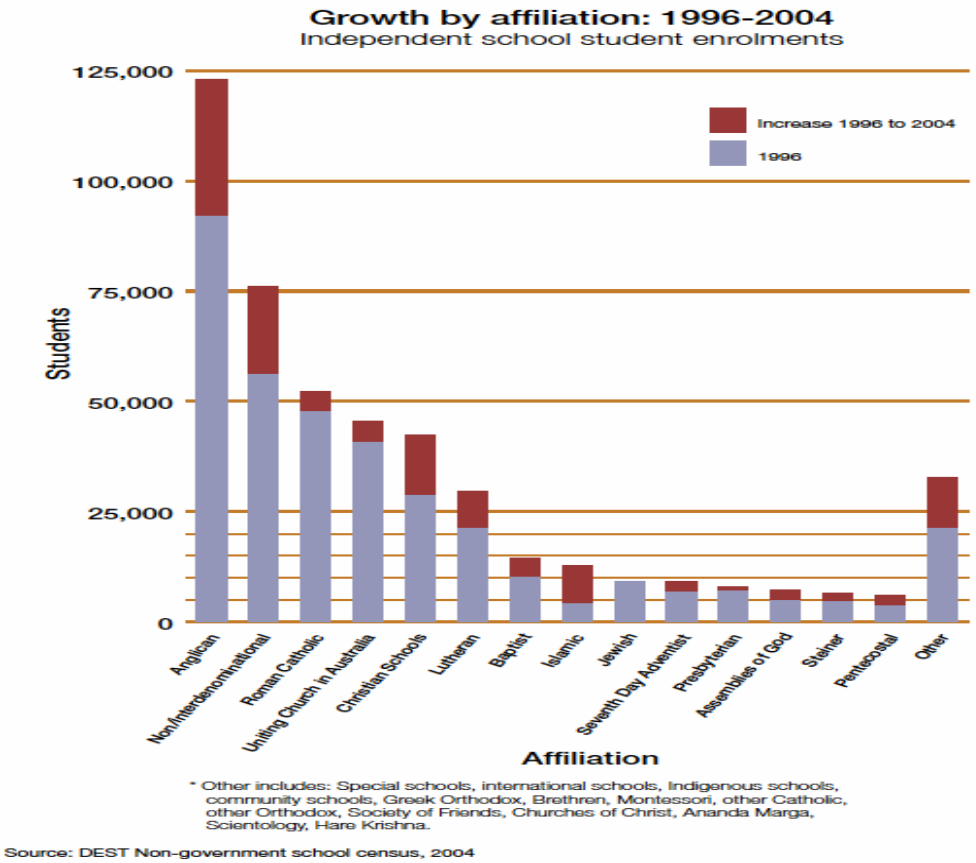
Anglican schools account for 26% of total enrolments in the independent schools sector and a third of all enrolments for schools with 1,000 or more students. Their average annual growth rate was 3.6% from 1996-2004 (ISCA, 2005).

Despite a slowing growth rate, the independent schools sector is expected to fare the decline in Australia's school population better than Catholic and government schools based on predicted trends which will see the total of school enrolments in 2010 increase to about 16.6% to approach the size of the Catholic sector which is expected to remain static over this period (ISCA, 2005).

4.5 Factors that Impact on Parents' Choice of School

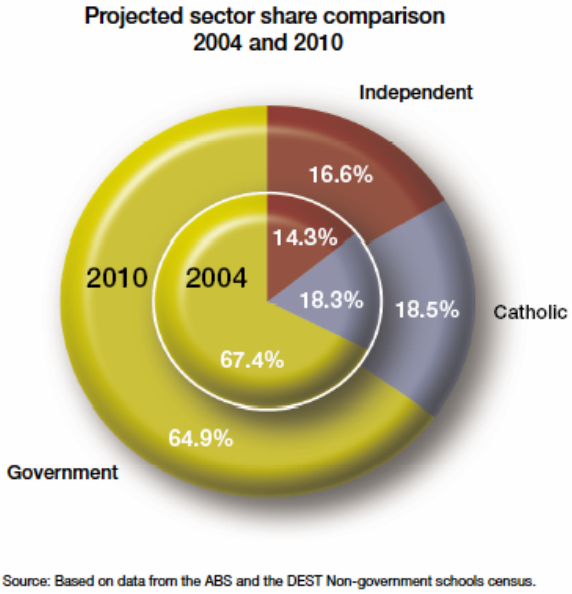
Families of students in the independent school sector often have experience of other schooling sectors having attended a state school themselves when the cost of private schooling was prohibitive to the wider population. Many families choose different schools for different children to cater for individual needs and interests (ISQ, 2007).

It is generally believed that independent schools encourage students with high academic ability to realise their full potential (ISQ, 2007).



Source: ISCA, 2007b

Figure 9. Growth by affiliation: 1996 - 2004



Source: ISCA, 2007b

Figure 10. Projected sector share comparison of schools in Queensland - 2004 and 2010

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter shows that there has been significant shift in the operating environment for schools. These include changes to policy, funding, as well as entry of new types of schools. In addition, social shifts have meant that parents are more prone to choosing some form of private schooling for their children. This has created a competitive market place for both state and independent schools. Public relations has the potential to contribute to the success of organisations such as schools operating in this competitive environment. In the Chapter Five, I present data about managers' characteristics and their choice of public relations strategies.

CHAPTER FIVE
Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will use the results of qualitative interviews conducted with Principals to explore the relationship of managers' characteristics on the selection of public relations strategies in Queensland Schools. Specifically, it will focus on and be organised around the following subsidiary questions posed in Chapter Two:

> *RQ i): What management characteristics do principals demonstrate in schools?*
>
> *RQ ii): What understanding do principals have of public relations?*
>
> *RQ iii): What public relations strategies do principals use?*

The aim of this chapter is therefore to examine how public relations strategies are used in schools and explore the relationship between management characteristics of Principals and the strategies they adopt to compete/survive in a changing environment.

Chapter Four provided a background of education in Queensland to provide a context for this study by describing the changing social, political, financial, technological and increasingly competitive environment managers have had to deal with in Queensland schools. This background highlighted the need for schools to compete for enrolments, government funding, and in some cases, their very survival; thus being forced to adopt strategies to be able to adapt to the changing landscape. This chapter also provided a background into the four different types of schools which have emerged in Queensland including traditional private schools, public (state) schools, Catholic schools and the newer independent schools. While the type of school is not directly under investigation in this study, the results outlined in this

chapter will be laid out according to the type of school under investigation to look for any trends that may emerge for future analysis.

5.2 Management Characteristics of Principals

Chapter Two highlighted the relationship between a variety of management characteristics and strategy, organisational growth, performance and success. While these characteristics were broken down into a range of psychological and demographic characteristics, the focus of the literature review was on observable demographic characteristics most relevant to managers in a school environment. Of these, four key characteristics were considered to provide the broadest coverage of the literature, thus providing the focus of this study – age, education, tenure, and experience. Each of these variables was further broken down into more specific characteristics demonstrated by each principal. Each of these will be explored further in the following sections in this chapter. While gender was not a characteristic explored in the literature review, it has been included in this table as a guide to the breakdown of male versus female participants in the four different types of schools under investigation.

5.2.1 Age

An analysis of age as a management characteristic can be further broken down into two more specific variables – current age and the age that respondents first became principals.

Current age

An analysis of the current age of principals (at the time of interview) showed there are a wide variety of ages for principals across all four types of schools within this study. Within the GPS category, the varying current age brackets differed dramatically with the youngest being 40 and the oldest being 65. The remaining respondent within this category was 51 at the time of interview. In the other independent school category, both respondents were aged in the 45 – 54 category, however they were on either end of this continuum, a trend that also carried over for the two respondents from the two Catholic schools. In the state system, the three respondents covered three different age categories with the youngest in the 35-44 age

bracket, the oldest in the 55-64 years of age bracket, and the remaining respondent in the age bracket between the other two respondents, 45-54. Certainly age is neither a barrier, nor a determinant of being a principal in the sample of schools in this study. More than half (six) of the principals interviewed were aged between 45 and 54 with two falling into the next age bracket from 55-64 and one in each of the oldest and youngest age categories of 65+ and 25 - 44 respectively. Table 10 provides a summary of principals' current age as well as the age they were when they first became principals as discussed in the next section.

Age when first becoming principal

Table 10 identifies the current age of principals as well as how old they were when they first became principals. Eight of the ten respondents became principal between 35 and 44 years of age with one of the females becoming principal at 45 and one of the males becoming principal at 23 years of age. There is therefore not a great deal of variation across the four different types of schools in terms of when respondents took on this management position with the only variation being the youngest to become principal being a male working in the independent sector, while the oldest to become principal was a female in the Catholic sector.

The oldest respondent commented in response to a question on whether he thought he had changed since first becoming a principal. His response was:

> At my ripe old age of 65 I think that mellowing means that you're more confident in yourself, that you don't have to be like that, just be yourself and manage the school and be wise and be as much a friend as you can and be encouraging, praise and make sure they know that you mean it and then get around your school and support them and be visible and talk. That's what I think about management. (GPS 3)

Table 10.

Table of Demographic Characteristics of Principals Relating to Age

School	Gender of principal	Age	Age became principal
GPS 1	Male	51	38
GPS 2	Female	48	35-44
GPS 3	Male	65	35-44
Ind 1	Male	53	23
Ind 2	Female	45-54	35-44
Cath 1	Female	52	45
Cath 2	Male	55-64	35-44
State 1	Male	55-64	35-44
State 2	Male	35-44	35-44
State 3	Male	45-54	35

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

5.2.2 Education

The management characteristics of education can be broken into two key variables including the highest level of education attained by each manager, and the variety of qualifications obtained. In Table 11 gender and age have also been included in the analysis of this characteristic to see what impact, if any, these variables have on the education of managers (principals) in schools.

Level of education

Table 11 showed no immediate pattern between the level and variety of educational qualifications held by managers (principals) in schools and the type of school they were working in. For example, of the three GPS schools, two respondents hold postgraduate (PG) qualifications predominantly in education, while the remaining principal holds undergraduate (UG) qualifications in education and economics. While the two respondents in other independent schools both hold postgraduate qualifications, in the Catholic schools, one holds a doctorate, while the other holds an undergraduate degree. Similarly in the state system, only one of the three holds postgraduate qualifications while the remaining two hold undergraduate

qualifications in education. While these findings certainly cannot be generalised due to the small sample size, it equally cannot be generalised that managers in GPS schools require higher degrees or a wider range of qualifications than managers in other private or public schools.

Six of the 10 respondents had achieved a postgraduate level of education with the remaining four respondents achieving an undergraduate degree or diploma qualification. Three of the four respondents holding undergraduate qualifications only were also the three oldest respondents (two in the 55-64 category and one in the 65+ category – see Table 11).

Also worth noting is that every female respondent held postgraduate qualifications with two of the three females holding masters qualifications while the remaining female respondent holds a doctorate.

Variety of qualifications

In terms of the variety of qualifications held by each of the respondents, the greatest diversity in qualifications was held by the youngest male who holds qualifications at UG and/or PG levels in Arts, Education, Educational Administration, Organisational Leadership, and Theology. This respondent is also the respondent who has the least functional experience having only worked in one system of education.

Apart from this respondent, only two of the 10 respondents held qualifications in areas outside of education with these two principals holding business related qualifications. One of these respondents was a male respondent who holds an Economics degree. As one of the three oldest respondents, this principal does not hold a postgraduate qualification, however, he is the only respondent to have worked in all four types of schools under investigation within this study.

The second respondent to hold a qualification outside of education was one of the female respondents who holds a Diploma with the Australian Institute of Company Directors. This respondent is also the only respondent to have experience outside of education. While the remaining seven out of 10 respondents only hold education qualifications, four of these hold postgraduate qualifications in

Educational Administration or Educational Leadership. Each of these qualifications is based on organisational or management literature and therefore do represent some level of business education.

Table 11.

Demographic Characteristics of Principals Relating to Education

School	Gender	Age	Highest level of education Post-graduate/Undergraduate qualifications	Type/Variety of Qualifications
GPS 1	Male	51	PG Dip Ed; UG and Hons in Geography	Education
GPS 2	Female	48	PG – MBA & M Ed Admin. UG – Arts & Dip. Ed.	Arts Education Educational Administration
GPS 3	Male	65	UG-B. Economics; B. Education; AEV Cert.	Economics Education
Ind 1	Male	53	PG - M Ed Admin; Org Leadership; Grad Dip Luth Ed (upgraded to Grad Dip in Theology in Education) UG – Dip. T Prim; B Ed/BA in Psych & History	Arts Education Educational Administration Organisational Leadership Theology
Ind 2	Female	45-54	PG – Masters in Ed. Leadership UG – BA, Dip Ed, Dip. Aust. Inst. of Company Directors	Arts Business Educational Leadership
Cath 1	Female	52	PG – Doctor of Education – Leadership UG – BA and Education	Arts Education Educational Leadership
Cath 2	Male	55-64	UG - Education	Education
State 1	Male	55-64	UG – BA & Education	Arts Education
State 2	Male	35-44	PG – Grad Dip Management. UG – B. Applied Science & Dip. Education	Education Management Science
State 3	Male	45-54	UG – Dip. Teach	Education

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

5.2.3. Tenure

As identified in Chapter Two, tenure can be broken into organisational tenure and industry tenure.

Organisational tenure

Organisational tenure refers to the level of permanency in a managerial role in terms of whether the manager is employed on a fixed contract basis, or holds a permanent (tenured) position. In terms of organisational tenure, managers from all of the nongovernment school types were on a fixed five year contract while all of the state (government) school principals were on tenure. According to one of the state school principals interviewed for this study, only state school principals are on tenure in education in Queensland. "Most principals in most Queensland (state) schools are there until they decide they want a change of scenery or they want to retire or resign or seek further promotion" (State 1). In contrast to a tenured position, the principal from the Catholic system commented on her fixed contract stating, "You can apply for an extension (to tenure) if you wish. I'm not sure I want to after the five years. I promised myself that this school needed someone in a position for a particular length of time and I'm nearly coming up to being the longest serving principal here in a long time. If I do that I'll be happy" (Cath 1).

Industry tenure

Industry tenure refers to the length of time managers have worked within a particular industry. It is therefore very similar to the length of experience respondents have had within education which will be covered in greater detail in the following section. All but one of the respondents have only served in education with the average industry experience being 28.7 years in education (based on the "Years in education" column in Table 12).

Table 12.

Table of Demographic Management Characteristics of Principals Relating to Tenure

	Age	Organisational tenure	Industry tenure	
School	Age	Tenure/5-year contract[a]	Years in education	Years at current school
GPS 1 Male	51	Contract	27 years	4 years
GPS 2 Female	48	Contract	26 years	10
GPS 3 Male	65	Contract	40+ years	10
Ind 1 Male	53	Contract	32 years	5
Ind 2 Female	45-54	Contract	25 years	12 years
Cath 1 Female	52	Contract	36 years	5
Cath 2 Male	55-64	Contract	40+ years	5
State 1 Male	55-64	Tenure	40+ yrs	5
State 2 Male	35-44	Tenure	22 years	5
State 3 Male	45-54	Tenure	29 years	2

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

[a] All contracts were five year fixed contracts.

5.2.4 Experience

The various attributes related to experience as outlined in Chapter Two include the length of experience, insider/outsider experience (based on internal/external appointment to principal, functional experience and other career experiences. Each will be dealt with here.

Length of experience

As identified earlier, respondents averaged 28.7 years in education with each of the older respondents being in education for more than 40 years – one of these now works in the GPS sector, while the other two work in the Catholic and state system. As would be expected, the length of experience corresponded to age with older managers (principals) having the most experience in education as compared with

their younger counterparts. There was a wide discrepancy, however, with the number of years each had spent as a principal in schools with the females spending the least amount of time as managers in schools – eight years (GPS 2), six years (Independent 2) and seven years (Catholic 1) as compared with their male counterparts who ranged from eight years to more than 30 years as principals or principals. The average length of experience for the male respondents was 15 years as principal as opposed to eight years for the females. Once again there was no obvious trend between the length of experience principals had and the type of school they were in charge of.

Insider/Outsider experience

In terms of insider/outsider experience, only two respondents were internal appointments (appointed from within their own school) – one from a GPS school and one from an Independent school. Both of these respondents were females. The remainder of principals were external appointments, that is, they were appointed from other schools either locally or internationally.

Functional experience

There was a great deal of variance in the level of functional experience of principals across the four types of schools and the various age brackets. One respondent (GPS 3) with the greatest length of experience also had the greatest functional experience within education, having served in all four types of schools while also serving in administration in Education Queensland, the state governing body of education in Queensland. The other respondent with more than 40 years experience had served in the state system only. This was also the case with his other state counterparts with all states school principals only serving in the state system of education.

Two of the non-government school principals had served in one system only – one in a QGSSSA (the girls' equivalent to the GPS system) school within the Anglican system and the other in an Independent school within the Lutheran system. These principals were also the two youngest respondents. The majority of other respondents (six of the 10) had served in more than one system, primarily combining experience in government (state) and non-government schools. Of these, one respondent with 25 years experience had worked across three systems including state, Catholic and independent schools.

In terms of the number of previous schools respondents had taught in, most had taught in an average of two or three schools. The notable exceptions were two of the state school principals who had taught in nine or ten schools previously, and two of the nongovernment principals who had taught in four or five schools. Of these, one GPS respondent had international experience, however was teaching in his first Australian school. The other principal who had taught in more than two to three schools was also the youngest respondent, who had taught in five schools in four Australian states. While this respondent had a great deal of experience across different schools, he also had the most limited experience in terms of serving in only one system of education. It should be noted that this principal had not only worked only in the Lutheran system, but had also been trained within this system and attributes his appointment to the position of principal at 23 years of age as being in "the right place at the right time" (Ind 1). As outlined in Section 5.2 on education, this principal demonstrated further extremes in each of the variables, as he holds qualifications in the widest range of areas in comparison to the other respondents.

Other industry experience

Only one of the 10 respondents had experience in an alternative industry to education having worked as a journalist prior to working in education. This was a female respondent (from Independent 2) and was only one of two respondents to hold qualifications in an area outside of education as outlined in the following section. A summary of the variables under experience demonstrated by managers (principals) in schools is outlined in Table 13.

Table 13.

Demographic Management Characteristics of Principals Related to Experience

School	Years in education	Years as Principal	External/ Internal appt.	Years at current school	Other schools State/ Cath/Ind	No. of previous schools Int/Qld Other States	Positions outside education
GPS 1	27 years	13 years 2 schools	External	4 years	State/Ind	5 Int & Qld	No
GPS 2	26 years	8 years - 1st school as Principal	Internal	10	Anglican only-Ind	2 (Qld)	No
GPS 3	40+ years	20+ years	External	10	State/ Cath/Ind/GPS		No
Ind 1	32 years	30 years (4 schools)	External	5	Lutheran only-Ind	5 in 4 states	No
Ind 2	25 years	6 years as Deputy Head including 6 months as Acting Head (first time)	Internal	12 years	State/ Cath/Ind	2 Qld & Vic	Yes
Cath 1	36 years	7 years 2 school	External	5	State/ Catholic	2-3 Qld	No
Cath 2	55-64	20+ years	External	5	Unknown	Unknown	No
State 1	40+ yrs	20+ years - 2-3 schools	External	5	State only	9-10 Qld	No
State 2	22 years	11 years (1st time as Principal)	External	5	State only	2 Qld	No
State 3	29 years	8 years as Acting Head (6 schools)	External	Unknown	State only	9-10 Qld	No

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

5.2.5 Conclusion

The data collected on the management characteristics of principals confirms that there is no distinct pattern according to the type of school they manage except in the area of tenure with only the state school principals enjoying the security of tenure, as opposed to the five year contracts of their non-government counterparts. Certainly characteristics of age, education and experience are wide and varied, not only across the four different school types, but within each system. Age is a characteristic that while not showing anything apparent on its own, does demonstrate possible relationships when combined with other management characteristics such as education, and as one would expect, experience.

Another demographic characteristic that, while not the focal point of this study, shows trends emerging when combined with other management characteristics, is gender. The two characteristics gender links with to show emerging patterns, were education and experience. Every female respondent held postgraduate qualifications with two of the three females holding masters qualifications while the remaining female respondent holds a doctorate. In terms of education, three of the four respondents to hold undergraduate qualifications only were also the three oldest respondents (two in the 55-64 category and one in the 65+ category, as indicated by shading in Table 14). While these findings certainly cannot be generalised due to the small sample size, it equally cannot be generalised that managers in GPS schools require higher degrees or a wider range of qualifications than managers in other private or public schools.

As demonstrated by the other three management characteristics, there was a wide range of experience amongst principals across the four types of schools in terms of insider/outsider, level of experience, other career experiences and functional experience. Certainly experience shows strong links with education as a management characteristic with the two working in tandem in some cases, and in opposition in other cases. As would be expected, experience is closely linked with age, with the older principals having more experience as principals. There was one exception to this, with one of the younger principals (Ind 1) having more experience than his older counterparts due to becoming a principal at 23. It will be interesting to see how these

characteristics marry with each of the principals' level of understanding of public relations in Section 5.3 below.

Table 14.

Table of Demographic Management Characteristics

	Age		Tenure	Experience			Education	
School	Age	Age became principal	Tenure/ 5-year contract[a]	Years in education	Years as Principal	External/ Internal appt.	Highest level of Education (UG/PG)	Type of quals. Bus/ Ed/Arts
GPS 1 Male	51	38	Contract	27 years	13 years	Ext.	PG	Education
GPS 2 Female	48	35-44	Contract	26 years	8 years	Int.	PG	Arts Ed. Admin.
GPS 3 Male	65	35-44	Contract	40+ years	20+ years	Ext.	UG	Economics Education
Ind 1 Male	53	23	Contract	32 years	30 years	Ext.	PG	Arts Ed Admin Ed Leadership Theology
Ind 2 Female	45-54	35-44	Contract	25 years	6 years (DH)	Int.	PG	Ed Leadership
Cath 1 Female	52	45	Contract	36 years	7 years	Ext.l	PG	Ed Leadership
Cath 2 Male	55-64	35-44	Contract	40+ years	20+ years	Ext.	UG	Education
State 1 Male	55-64	35-44	Tenure	40+ yrs	20+	Ext.	UG	Arts Education
State 2 Male	35-44	35-44	Tenure	22 years	11 years	Ext.	PG	Education Management Science
State 3 Male	45-54	35	Tenure	29 years	8 years (AH)	Ext.	UG	Education

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

[a] All contracts were five year fixed contracts.

5.3 Managers' Understanding of Public Relations

To describe the management characteristics demonstrated by managers (principals) in schools, the following section will address the second research question to examine what understanding principals have about what public relations is and what role it plays in an organisation?

To gain an insight into managers' understanding of public relations and the role it can play in schools, research questions two and three were broken down in the following ways:

RQ ii): What understanding do principals have of public relations?

- *How do managers (principals) of schools define public relations?*
- *How do managers (principals) view the role of public relations in schools?*

RQ iii): What public relations strategies do principals use?

- *Is public relations used as a strategic function in schools?*
- *What public relations strategies have principals employed to respond to their changing environment?*
- *What* activities *do public relations practitioners perform in schools?*

5.3.1 How do Managers (Principals) of Schools Define Public Relations?

This question in the interview presented the greatest challenge to principals. Out of the 10 respondents, only one appeared to handle this question with ease. That respondent was the only respondent to have previous experience outside of education whilst also holding a degree in Journalism. Despite the hesitation this question presented for most respondents, there were three distinct ways that principals conceptualised the idea of public relations. These included:

1. the *relationship building* function of the school (as an "interaction" or "interface" between the school and the community);
2. maintaining and building a school's *image and reputation*; and
3. the *communication* and *promotional* function within the school.

While respondents defined public relations in these three ways, four of the respondents went a step further to clarify their definition, "in a school setting" also prefacing their response with "I think in a school context" (GPS 1); and "I guess it's everything for a school" (GPS 2). Such clarification in their responses to this question suggested that these respondents consider the definition of public relations

may differ in a school setting as opposed to a corporate setting or in other organisations.

The preface by the State 1 principal also made reference to a school setting in his definition of public relations by stating, “Public relations as opposed to school. See that’s the problem. Public relations is a profession or a calling or a career, isn’t it? But it’s been so bastardised... [people] keep telling me they’re different things”(State 1). While I am not sure what this respondent meant by his preface ‘public relations as opposed to school’, the remainder of his response to this question reflects aspects of the literature on the confusion over the definition of public relations and the consequent understanding of the discipline by managers as outlined in Chapter Two.

Public relations as a relationship building function in schools

Five out of the 10 respondents defined public relations as a relationship building function in schools with respondents referring to this function as:

- “an interaction between a school and the wider public” (GPS 1).
- ”a measure of the quality of your interaction with the community at large” (GPS 3).
- ”how the school and the people of the school relate to each other and relate to the community” (Independent 1).
- ”the interface between a company and the community and clients of that particular environment” (Independent 2).
- ”customer service” (State 2).

Principals in the two GPS boys’ schools and the two other Independent schools defined public relations in terms of the interaction the school has with the community. That is, four of the five principals from the more expensive schools targeted for the purposes of this study, focused on the relationship aspects in their definition of public relations. The fifth respondent from one of the state schools, defined public relations as “customer service” which was the only reference to this definition of public relations. While not necessarily strictly fitting under the banner of relationship building, this theme tied in more so than the other themes to this

response. This response is further discussed in the later section on strategic approaches adopted by managers.

Of these five respondents, the two principals from the GPS boys' schools each went on to expand on this definition with GPS 1 continuing on to say public relations is about "identifying which members of the wider public you want to appeal to and how best to dialogue with those sectors" (GPS 1). While this may seem to allude to public relations as a communication function more than to relationship building, the distinction comes in understanding the difference between simply communicating with different sectors to promote or sell a product, as opposed to identifying who an organisation needs to be talking to in order to build relationships. This principal's definition is also consistent with the definition provided in Chapter Two by Cutlip et al. (2006) which defined public relations as "The management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics upon whom its success depends" (p. 5). This principal went on to say, "Everybody is a stakeholder at the end of the day, even somebody who has nothing to do with the school whatsoever is a stakeholder because they are a stakeholder in the community" (GPS 1).

The principal from the second GPS boys' school (GPS 3) took a different approach to relationship building focusing more on relationship building as a measure of popularity based on how "people are treated". This could in part be likened to the response from the State 2 principal that public relations is about customer service, however the GPS 3 principal expanded further on his definition of public relations as a relationship building function in schools in the following way:

> Public relations is a measure of your popularity or the school's popularity because of the way people are spoken to and the way they're treated and the way that they're made to feel. It is married to frequent interaction that leaves the recipient feeling both positive and valued. (GPS 3)

There are elements of this definition that waiver between the organisation and an individual's attributes, with this principal quite often referring back to his own role in

building relationships especially when he refers to public relations as a measure "of your popularity or the school's popularity". He continued by saying:

> It's a particular attribute that some people are innately good at because of their style and their personality. It comes from your people skills that are attractive or unattractive. I think that a lot of people who are good at it, spend a lot of time with what are the aspects of a generous disposition. (GPS 3)

It should be noted that while the principal from State School 1 did not define public relations as a relationship building function, many aspects of answers to questions that followed throughout the interview were consistent with the definition provided above by the GPS 3 principal. For example, when asked what public relations strategies are used in schools, apart from listing off such activities as the newsletter, events and so forth), the majority of his answer focused on relationships and his role in cultivating relationships. "It's like any relationship. It only works as long as you keep making it work and so you have to be out there doing it" (State 1). Like the comment from the principal from GPS 1, this comment is once again consistent with the Cutlip et al.(2006) definition that public relations is the management function that identifies, establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships" (p. 5).

The principal of State 1 also shared the theme of treating people well and making them feel good, as expressed by the principal from GPS 3. The State 1 principal expressed this in the following way:

> One of the first things I did when I came here was increasing the school's success in sport. Now me coming from a position where sport played absolutely no part in my life... nor was I interested in it, and yet the first... challenge I took on was increasing the school's success in sport... because the co-curricula program was a major part of the culture. I remember sitting at [the football] once and watching all the Under 13s sitting like a row on the garden bench outside the pavilion where I was watching the Firsts play, and you could see what was in their heads. They were figuring out which jersey they would wear in five years time because young people want to belong... So I wanted to create an environment in which kids could belong and in which the filter down effects of success would allow everybody to feel as though they were part of something. (State 1)

What is most worthy of note is that these two principals who were the only principals to take this approach to relationship building, were also the two oldest principals surveyed with both having more than 40 years experience in education.

Another point also worth noting is that while the female respondent from Independent 2 did not expand further on her definition as a relationship building function, her definition as ”the interface between a company or a business and the community of that particular environment” certainly reflected her previous experience in business and her business qualifications, with all other respondents placing their definition of public relations as a relationship building function very much within a school setting.

Public relations' role in maintaining and building a school's image and reputation

Three of the 10 respondents defined public relations as playing a role in maintaining and building a school's image and reputation with two of these once again coming from the GPS (or equivalent) system – one being a male respondent from a boys' school (GPS 1) and the other being a female respondent from a girls' school (GPS 2). The third respondent was from a Catholic school (Cath 1) and was the second female (from a total of three females in this study) to define public relations as being important in maintaining a school's image and reputation.

The definition of public relations as maintaining and building a school's image was a secondary aspect to the definition of public relations for the GPS 1 principal whose primary definition focused on the relationship building aspect of the public relations function. After providing this definition, he then went on to say, “Public relations is all about building a mental image because public relations is often [conducted] by some form of communication medium, which is not necessarily interpersonal, so it's building a rapport and an image and establishing the lines of communication” (GPS 1). This response further highlights this principal's reliance on communication as a mechanism for building relationships (as previously stated) as opposed to the interpersonal approach adopted by GPS 3 and State 1 as outlined earlier. Certainly this focus is reinforced in terms of his strategic approach.

The definition of public relations as maintaining and building a school's image and reputation was also secondary for the principal from Cath 1 whose primary definition was on the communication and promotional aspects of the public relations function in schools as discussed in the next subsubsection. This principal maintained that "a good reputation" comes "as a result" of "getting your good message out" going on to say that "a good school's reputation goes round and round" (Cath 1).

The only respondent to define public relations as maintaining and establishing a good image or reputation as their primary response was from GPS 2 stating, "I guess it's [public relations is] everything for a school. It's everything that a school or members of a school can do that affect public regard for that particular institution" (GPS 2).

This notion was reinforced by the State 1 principal who while once again never providing a concrete definition of public relations, spoke about the importance of "substance":

> In a school context... public relations is about selling a sizzle. Public relations should be about selling a sausage. Public relations is often about selling a sizzle because that's what people see as a strategic edge, as a point of difference. And I probably say that quite knowingly and quite seriously because I think that's at the same time, both the strength and the disadvantage of public relations, that people are trying to market something that doesn't have an inherent substance. Early in my time here, people said to me, why don't you go and market the school. I said, I need something to market first. I could have marketed the reputation. I could have marketed a whole lot of things about this school but I would rather wait until I had something that I... consider is something of substance [like] academic outcomes amongst other things." (State 1)

Public relations as a communication and promotional function in schools

Four respondents defined public relations as the communication and promotional function with two of these being in the two Catholic schools targeted for the purpose of this study, one from GPS 1, while the other was from one of the state schools (State 3). As mentioned previously, the female principal from Cath 1 believed that

communication was important in developing a good reputation stating, "I suppose public relations is getting your message out. It's basically selling the message that you're trying to develop with the express purpose of improving your image in the wider community" (Cath 1). The other two respondents to define public relations in this way were both male with the principal from Cath 2 stating, "Public relations, I would see it as something along the lines of I've got something I want others to see and be able to evaluate it and my hope would be that they would say, yes, that is good" (Cath 2). The principal from State 3 defined public relations as "basically keeping the community informed. We use various methods to do that and as time goes on, those methods come to fruition" (State 3). There are aspects of this definition that could allude to relationship building as in academic definitions of public relations, "keeping the community informed" is a key element of relationship building, however, this principal did not make any mention of this function of public relations.

Table 15.

Principals' Definition of Public Relations

School	What do you think public relations is?
GPS 1 Male	• the interaction between a school and the wider public • Public relations is all about building a mental image • public relations is often by some form of communication medium
GPS 2 Female	It's everything that a school or members of a school can do that affect public regard for that particular institution.
GPS 3 Male	It's a measure of the quality of your interaction with people at large and the community at large.
Ind 1 Male	In the school setting? It's how the school and the people of the school relate to each other and relate to the community.
Ind 2 Female	The interface between a company or a business and the community, the community and the clients, I suppose of that particular environment.
Cath 1 Female	I suppose public relations is getting your good message out. As a result of that, you get a good reputation.
Cath 2 Male	Public relations, I would see it as something along the lines of I've got something I want others to see it and be able to evaluate it.
State 1 Male	Public relations as opposed to school. I don't know if what is PR or marketing. People keep telling me they're different things.
State 2 Male	Customer service.
State 3 Male	Public relations is basically keeping the community well informed. We use various methods to do that and as time goes on, those methods come to fruition.

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

Table 15 provides a summary of the various definitions by each of the principals across the four different types of schools. It should be noted that while some respondents included one or two themes in their definitions, only one respondent (GPS 1) covered all three themes combining them in his definition by stating, "it's building a rapport and an image and establishing lines of communication" (GPS 1).

Table 16 goes one step further to provide a summary of the various definitions of public relations as outlined with the age, gender, education, tenure and experience of each respondent also included in this table due to the fact that these characteristics were included in this discussion on how managers define public relations.

Table 16.

Table of Management Characteristics and Definition of Public Relations

	Age	**Education**		**Tenure**	**Experience**	**Definition of Public Relations**		
School	Age	Highest level of education (UG/PG)	Type of quals.	Tenure/ 5-year contract	Years as principal	Relationship building	Image & reputation	Communication & promotion
GPS 1 Male	51	PG	Education	Contract	13 years	X	X	X
GPS 2 Female	48	PG	Ed Admin	Contract	8 years		X	
GPS 3 Male	65	UG	Economics Education	Contract	20+ years	X		
Ind 1 Male	53	PG	Arts Ed Admin Ed L'drship Theology	Contract	30 years	X		
Ind 2 Female	45-54	PG	Arts Business Ed L'drship	Contract	6 years (DH)	X		
Cath 1 Female	52	PG	Ed L'drship	Contract	7 years		X	X
Cath 2 Male	55-64	UG	Education	Contract	20+ years			X
State 1 Male	55-64	UG	Arts Education	Tenure	20+ years	X		
State 2 Male	35-44	PG	Education Management Science	Tenure	11 years	X		
State 3 Male	45-54	UG	Education	Tenure	8 years (AH)			X

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

5.3.2 How do Managers (Principals) View the Role of Public Relations in Schools?

To gain a further understanding of the importance managers place on public relations and the role it plays in organisations, respondents were asked what they thought public relations can do for an organisation. This question also served to build on respondents' definition of public relations as per the previous interview question, with some respondents reframing their definition of public relations. While 100% of respondents agreed that public relations plays an important role in schools, their responses were divided into *tangible* and *intangible* outcomes of public relations as outlined in Table 17. The tangible outcomes of how public relations can contribute to an organisation built further on the definitions provided in the previous section in terms of building image, reputation and community. The intangible outcomes identified by respondents ranged from identifying public relations as a key to the success of the organisation ("make or break it") to making principals' jobs "a lot easier" (saving time).

Table 17.

Table of Management Characteristics in Conjunction With Understanding (Definition and Identified Role) of Public Relations

The role public relations plays in schools (as identified by principals)				
	Tangible outcomes		Intangible outcomes	
Type of School	Building an organisation's image/reputation	Building a sense of community	Time saver for managers	Contributor to success in schools
GPS 1	X			
GPS 2	X			X
GPS 3	X	X	X	X
Ind 1	X	X		
Ind 2		X		X
Cath 1	X			
Cath 2		X	X	X
State 1				
State 2	X		X	
State 3	X	X		X

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study.

Tangible outcomes

Ten respondents identified tangible contributions public relations can make in an organisation with half of these identifying its importance in terms of "building the image for an organisation" (GPS 1), while the other half focused on public relations' importance in "humanising an organisation" and building a sense of community.

Building an organisation's image/reputation

One respondent from each of the GPS, Independent and Catholic sectors spoke about the importance of public relations in building an organisation's image or reputation in different ways with two State principals identifying this building and reinforcing image as being a key contribution of public relations in schools. As summarised in Table 15, the principal from GPS 1 stated, "Public relations can actually build the image of an organisation in the minds of each individual recipient" (GPS 1). This contribution was reinforced by the principal from Cath 1 who maintained that you get a good reputation "as a result of" public relations.

One respondent from both the Independent and the State sectors alluded to the importance of public relations in building an image and reputation when speaking about the importance of "community" and "public confidence" in their responses with the principal from Ind 1 stating, "The way we come across as a community - what we say and how we appear, what we do and our spirit – that's enormously important" (Ind 1). The principal from State 2 continued this theme stating:

> The spin-offs in terms of public confidence can be really significant. Get the right message out and back it up with some substance, then it actually fuels a spiralling upwards trend where I've actually seen the other way where the public message is mismatched and actually drives down quite quickly in some places. (State 2)

The second state school principal to identify the importance of public relations in building an organisation's image or reputation focused on public relations' importance in how people "perceive your organisation". "In today's environment part of being a successful organisation is how people perceive your organisation and they react according to that perception" (State 2).

Building a sense of community

The five respondents who identified the importance of public relations in building a sense of community once again spread across the four different types of schools with one respondent from the GPS, Catholic and State sectors and two respondents from the Independent sector. As mentioned in the previous section, two respondents (Ind 1 and State 3) linked this outcome as being important to building an organisation's image or reputation. The principal from Ind 1 further went on to speak about the importance of public relations in driving the "spirit" of the school while also alluding to its impact on school culture in terms of "what parents say about their child's school experience, what their students say and what my teachers say is enormously important….What's the spirit of the place like? What's it like to live and breathe here" (Ind 1).

The respondent from the other Independent school focused more on the sense of community in terms of "humanising the organisation" and labelled public relations as "a really important part of marketing". "I think it humanises an actual organisation. Not so much schools but other organisations can seem very cold, clinical businesses and they're there just to make money and therefore the customer focus, all those sorts of things are secondary" (Ind 2).

The other two responses were from two of the older males in the study (55-64 and 65+) from GPS 3 and Cath 2 and focused more on the "feel good" aspect of public relations in building a sense of community with Cath 2 stating, "In terms of community, it gives it a buzz, you know. So it's like supporting a football team that's winning. You feel good about it" (Cath 2). This response is consistent with the response from the State 3 principal as outlined in the previous section, "part of being a successful organisation is how people perceive your organisation and they react according to that perception" (State 3).

The principal from GPS 3 continued this line of thought saying the following.

> If you haven't got good promotions, it really doesn't matter because the community aren't talking you up or the school up. They don't feel good about it. You've got to make them feel good about it. You've got to be the best PR person in the school. (GPS 3)

Once again, this principal drifted between the importance of public relations (or his definition of public relations) and the role the manager plays in public relations.

Intangible outcomes

Eight of the 10 respondents also spoke of the intangible outcomes of public relations in two ways – saving time for managers by making their job "a lot easier", and as being critical to the success of the organisation. Three respondents identified how public relations saves them time, while five of the respondents linked public relations to an organisation's success.

Public relations as a "time saver" for managers

The three respondents who spoke about the time saving benefits of public relations each focused on a different aspect of how public relations makes their role "a lot easier".

The principal from Cath 2 spoke about how public relations would make his job much easier in terms of its role in boosting and maintaining enrolments and by building the sense of the community and the "buzz" as per his quote in the previous section, prefacing his response to this question in the interview with, "Well it can make your job a lot easier" (Cath 2). He also spoke about the return on investment in public relations which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The principal from State 2 spoke about how much easier it is to maintain "existing confidence" once it has been established through public relations building on his quote from the previous section, "My job when I came here was simply building on the existing confidence and that just makes so many things so much easier" (State 2).

The principal from GPS 3 reinforced this notion of saving time by prefacing his response with, "If you mind that [public relations], you will save yourself a lot of time. You will overcome a lot of the criteria for a good school" (GPS 3). He further built on this aspect of the role of public relations in first establishing relationships

and then maintaining relationships to help deal with community attitudes and potential conflict. In particular, he spoke about the need for teachers to be trained in the importance of these underlying principles of public relations:

> I think maybe we should be doing a lot more about professional development of teachers in public relations. I think we should be spending time by teaching them how to do those things, how to talk to [parents], how to make them go away feeling valued. Honestly, the support they would get, because they felt like that. They wouldn't have to lift a finger to be worried about parental support if you've spent the time to do that but we don't. We invest in curriculum. We invest in boys' education. Who's going to put money into PR with their staff and yet, wow. If you had done that, and you had mind of that, then you will find a lot of other things a lot easier to do. I should imagine any conflict would be divided by 10." (GPS 3)

Public relations' contribution to success in schools

While the responses in the previous section focused on public relations outcomes more related to saving time for managers, all three respondents touched on the importance of establishing and maintaining relationships with key stakeholders (specifically parents, students and staff). These responses reinforced the first component of the Cutlip et al. (2006) definition of public relations of "identifying, establishing and maintaining, mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success depends" (p. 5). The responses outlined in this section reinforce the latter part of this definition which focuses on the importance public relations can play in an organisation's success.

When asked what they thought public relations could do for an organisation, many respondents made comment on what can happen to the organisation if it doesn't utilise public relations in terms of the damage that could be done. "If you haven't got good public relations... the community aren't talking you up" (GPS 3). This is in line with the comment at the end of the previous section which touched on public relations' role in avoiding (and dealing with) conflict. For the principal of GPS 2, the response to the question of what public relations can do for an organisation was simple, "Make or break it" This response was reinforced by the principals of Ind 2 and State 3 with the principal of State 3 responding that public relations can 'basically make the organisation successful'. The Ind 2 respondent

elaborated on the key to public relations' contribution to the success of the organisation by highlighting its role in managing relationships which is once again consistent with Cutlip et al's definition. "Really, the success of the business... is about how well people can juggle or manage their relationship and it is very much about relationships" (Ind 2).

Two other respondents (once again from two of the older male respondents from Cath 2 and GPS 3) commented on public relations' contribution to the success of the organisation in terms of the return on investment an organisation enjoys from public relations. One of these responses (Cath 2) was highlighted earlier in terms of how public relations will return itself in both maintaining and building enrolments and building a sense of community. The response from GPS 3, however, went a step further to highlight the need for managers of schools to invest in public relations, noting that he does not as much as he knows he should. He also made comment as to why principals might stumble over how to define public relations in his response. "I think why these principals are stumbling over the answer to your question, it's because none of us have invested in it to the extent we're able to say, well here, we've done this. I haven't. I haven't invested in it" (GPS 3). Table 17 provides a summary of principals' responses on what public relations can do for an organisation.

Table 18.

Summary of Principals' Definitions of What Public Relations can do for an Organisation

School	What do you think public relations can do for an organisation?
GPS 1 Male	Public relations can actually build the image of an organisation in the minds of each individual recipient.
GPS 2 Female	Make or break it.
GPS 3 Male	If you mind that you will save yourself a lot of time. You will overcome a lot of the criteria for a good school.
Ind 1 Male	The way we come across as community, what we say and how we appear and what we do, our spirit is - that's enormously important.
Ind 2 Female	It's a really important part of marketing. I think it humanises the actual organisation. The success of the business is about how well people can juggle or manage their relationship and it is very much about relationships.
Cath 1 Female	As a result of that, you get a good reputation.
Cath 2 Male	Well it can make your job a lot easier. What it will do is return itself in enrolments and that's specifically in education. In terms of the community, it gives it a buzz, you know. So it's like supporting a football team that's winning. You feel good about it.
State 1 Male	Both the strength and the disadvantage of public relations, that people are trying to market something that doesn't have an inherent substance.
State 2 Male	The spin offs in terms of public confidence can be really significant. My job when I came here was simply building on the existing confidence and that just makes so many things so much easier.
State 3 Male	Basically make the organisation successful. I mean, in today's environment it's part of being a successful organisation is how people perceive your organisation and they react accordingly to that perception.

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

5.3.3 How Strategic is the Public Relations Function Within Schools?

To determine whether public relations was viewed as a strategic function in schools, respondents were asked about the title, size and nature of the role of the public relations practitioner and/or department within their schools. It should be noted that this question is distinctly different from whether public relations is actually used as a strategic function within schools. How public relations may be viewed by managers as being strategic and how it is actually used as a strategic function are distinctly different based on managers' understanding of what strategic public relations is. A measure of how strategic the public relations function is in schools, is through

looking at whether the public relations manager is part of the dominant coalition (Grunig, J. E., 2006), and whether the public relations manager is responsible for the public relations plan, that is, if in fact such a plan exists.

Before investigating these criteria as drawn from a review of the literature on strategic public relations in Chapter Two, this section looks at principals' responses to the question, "How strategic do you think this role [public relations] is in responding to increased competition in the education sector?". This question in part builds on the previous question of what managers (principals) think public relations can do for an organisation. As we saw in the previous section, five out of the 10 respondents believed that public relations was integral to the success of an organisation. As success is ultimately what organisations strive to achieve, one would consider that these responses allude to the fact that public relations should be an integral part of the organisation's overall strategy to achieve success. This section will investigate further as to whether that is the case.

When asked how strategic they considered this role to be in responding to increased competition in the education sector, six out of the 10 principals had difficulty in answering this question. The remaining four responses came from two out of the three GPS schools, with one response from the second independent school (Ind 2) and the other from Cath 1. The four responses were divided into two distinct groups with two respondents answering this question from the aspect of being part of a larger strategic team, while the other two spoke more about how "critical" or "significant" public relations is to the organisation, with their responses being more in line with the previous question on what public relations can do for an organisation. The Cath 1 principal spoke about the significance of public relations, as follows, but did not elaborate on how public relations plays a strategic role within the school. "I think her role is significant in that our best source of students is when we get them younger in the primary school" (Cath 1).

Both principals from the GPS schools and the Ind 2 respondent also touched on other elements considered critical to the practice of strategic public relations as outlined in the literature – "open communication" between the manager and public relations practitioner, and the use of research to inform public relations planning.

As evidenced by Table 19, while there are more common definitions of public relations identified by principals (e.g. relationship building which was the most common definition provided by principals), these do not necessarily marry with how principals view the contribution public relations can make in an organisation (with the exception of some principals whose responses to this question were similar (or identical in the case of GPS 2) to their definition of public relations. It will be interesting to see in the following sections how principals actually use public relations in comparison to how they view the role it can play in a school.

Public relations as part of the dominant coalition

As identified in Chapter 2, one of the key criterion to determine whether public relations is regarded as a strategic function within organisations was whether or not the public relations manager holds a place within the dominant coalition. Two out of the 10 respondents considered public relations to play a strategic role in their schools as they sat on a senior management team. The Ind 2 principal also described the public relations role as being strategic due to the fact that it is part of a senior team, "I think everyone considers competition and certainly anyone on the senior management team, not just this role, considers competition" (Ind 2). This idea of the role being strategic due to its place on a senior management team was reinforced by the GPS 2 principal, "I think it is because, obviously there's team decisions" (GPS 2).

This section will look at how many public relations practitioners working within the schools within this study sit on the dominant coalition, the overall body responsible for making decisions about the strategic responses the school will make to deal with the political, regulatory, legal, socio-economic, technological, social and competitive changes within its broader operating environment.

Table 19 illustrates that when asked if the public relations manager sits on the senior management team, only three of the 10 respondents (GPS 2, Cath 2 and State 3) said yes. Of these, only one (GPS 2) had a full-time, qualified person in this position, while the Cath 2 used either a secretary who worked alongside the principal

(thus considered part of the senior management team) and State 3 employed a part-time, unqualified casual in this role who sits on the strategic public relations and marketing committee in the school. This question once again relied on the managers' understanding of how strategic public relations is practised in schools. To gain a more accurate response of whether public relations is practised strategically in schools, the next section will look at what role the public relations manager plays in strategic planning within the school to respond to increased competition. The following section will then go on to identify what title managers of schools give to their public relations manager, the nature of this role and/or the team within the school, and the size of the public relations team in the organisation.

Table 19.

Principals who Include the Public Relations Manager/Practitioner on a Senior Management Team Within the School

School	Does the public relations manager sit on the senior management team?
GPS 1	No – But we second her to an executive meeting if we know we will be using her time well. It's like a lot of roles in the school, she could justifiably be at an executive meeting but she would be bored stiff with all of the non appropriate material for her domain.
GPS 2	Yes
GPS 3	No
Ind 1	No
Ind 2	No
Cath 1	No
Cath 2	Yes.
State 1	No
State 2	No
State 3	Yes we have a part time casual position for 10 hours a week for the marketing/public relations officer and we also have a strategic public relations and marketing committee in the school.

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

Open dialogue between principal and public relations manager

The GPS 1 principal reinforced the "critical" role of public relations to the organisation, highlighting that he considers the public relations role within his school as being strategic due to the open dialogue he has with his public relations manager:

> It's critical. Absolutely critical. I would like it to be as strategic as possible. I would expect her to have a feel for how we're going in enrolments and whether we need to put some more effort into appealing to the wider public. Her strategies for making an impression in the market place for marketing purposes are critical. Also I will always inform her of some really sensitive issues that may blow up and get her starting to think about how we can deal with that if it blows up so that she's ready to go almost straight away. I will tell her what I would often not tell a lot of people because she's got to be ready. (GPS 1)

The Ind 2 respondent, who is responsible for relationship building within her school as the Deputy Principal, also considered the public relations role to be strategic due to the open dialogue she had with the principal and her role in advancing the Principal's strategic approach for the school:

> The principal is the most strategic... but my role (the relationship role) with the principal is to support him but also to be the operational leader, which lets him be more strategic but there's no doubt that I have to brief him on everything that I do but I have to be aware of what he's doing and the direction of the school so that everything that I do, at an operational level, advances in that practical sense the strategic. (Ind 2)

As identified earlier, a measure of strategic use of public relations is whether this function sits within the dominant coalition (the decision making team within the school). Certainly, the public relations manager/practitioner needs to be informed to play a strategic role within the school. This partly requires dialogue with the principal as identified above, but also requires the use of research to ensure an adequate understanding of the organisation's stakeholders and external operating environment is properly informing public relations planning.

Use of research to inform public relations planning

The principal from GPS 2 spoke about how the senior management team is informed by various pieces of research to achieve its goals:

> It's that particular role that will work closely with demographic analysts to correct information after each census, on our catchments which determines our SES so we then use that information to tidy our marketing and so, for example, that role collected information about attendees to Open Day and once we saw how many people were coming from Calamvale or Pullenvale or wherever it might be, that also helps us target our market. That will conduct reports for Equity Reviews as well as Non Acceptance Surveys and those sorts of things and we use that information back strategically. (GPS 2)

Who develops the strategic plan to respond to increased competition?

Another determinant of whether strategic public relations is practised in schools is the involvement in and the nature of the planning conducted by the public relations practitioner. The first determinant of the existence of strategic public relations is whether in fact a public relations plan exists. Six of the 10 principals said they do have a plan in place with two principals (Cath 1 and State 1) about to put one in place. This provides an indication that these schools have recognised the need to respond in a planned, cohesive way to the changing operating environment and resulting competition they are facing. This is reinforced by a comment by the principal of GPS 3 who stated the following:

> We lost 360 boys in 10 years when I arrived and the next year I'd lost 15, the next year I lost none and there was a slow increase. And it's come from 675, 700 to 750 in the secondary school. Once upon a time the school had 1100 in the secondary school. I've got 1100 next year but they go from P to 12 now, not just seven to 12. (GPS 3)

As illustrated in Table 20, the seven schools who have a public relations plan in place include all three GPS schools, both Independent schools, and one of the state schools. Of those seven schools, while the public relations plan is developed by the public relations manager/practitioner in six of the schools, it is done collaboratively with the principal or as part of the broader senior management team. From these tables, principals appear to consider this as typical of a strategic public relations role within schools. This is reinforced by the Ind 1 principal:

> This is fairly typical I would imagine in most independent schools. There is a person on there. There is a sub-committee of that which is the marketing committee. I'm on

that marketing committee, as is the Principal, as is the Director of International, as is the Marketing Manager and therefore, that strategy is developed collectively, her role is to implement. (Ind 1)

This response highlights the technical nature (as opposed to strategic nature) of the public relations role in this school as described earlier in Chapter Two. Certainly this approach appears to also be taken by GPS 3 with this plan described as an operational plan for the school as opposed to a strategic plan which provides the direction for the school.

Table 20.

Table Identifying Which Schools Have a Public Relations Plan and who is Responsible for Developing That Plan

School	PR Plan?	Who develops the plan?
GPS 1	Yes	PR person developed that along with my oversight. The reality of it is 99% her work.
GPS 2	Yes	
GPS 3	We have an operational plan every year and it embraces all the components of what we do in marketing whether it be the outreach material, whether it be my visits to Longreach or Mt Isa.	
Ind 1	We do.	
Ind 2	Yes	The Marketing Manager and the Board.
Cath 1	Yes and No – it's Still in progress	She and I are responsible for that. She works with me.
Cath 2	No	
State 1	No	
State 2	Yes	
State 3	No	It would sort of sit with the deputy principal who looks after that area.

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

Title, nature and size of the public relations role in schools

The following findings are both quantitative and qualitative in nature using the title of the role of the most senior public relations manager as well as the title of any other public relations practitioner(s) within schools to determine whether managers demonstrate an understanding of the difference between public relations and complimentary disciplines such as marketing. The title may also provide an indication of the seniority the public relations practitioner(s) hold in the organisation.

The nature of the public relations role will be explored in more detail. However, in exploring how important the role is considered to be by managers, this section will also examine who performs the public relations function within each school; whether that position(s) is full-time or part-time; and whether the position(s) is internal, external or both (through the use of a public relations consultant).

Finally, the size of the public relations department within the school may provide an indication as to the importance the manager (principal) places on this function within the school.

Title of Public Relations practitioners in schools

An investigation of the way managers in schools label the public relations function also helps to shed light on both their understanding of public relations and whether or not they consider it to play a strategic role within the school. Despite the fact that half of the respondents defined public relations as a relationship building function within the school, none of the definitions provided by respondents in Table 21 hold the title of public relations manager or director in isolation. Two of the 10 respondents refer to public relations in the title of their practitioners in conjunction with marketing and communication (GPS 1), and marketing (Cath 1), however, Cath 1 has simply described the role, rather than provide a title as public relations is conducted by her secretary amongst a variety of administrative tasks within the school. This will be discussed further in the following section on the nature of the role of public relations in schools. What is important to note, however, is that only half of the respondents have a formal title or role within their schools to respond to the competitive environment with all five coming from the three GPS schools and the two Independent schools under investigation in this study. This highlights the link

between available resources in the organisation and its ability to respond to its environment as covered by organisational literature.

Certainly the confusion between public relations and marketing as highlighted in a review of the literature in Chapter Two is evident with three of the five schools who have a formal title for the position of public relations in their schools referring to their public relations manager as a marketing manager. Only two managers of schools in this study demonstrate an understanding of the distinction between marketing and public relations with GPS 1 distinguishing between marketing, communication and public relations in its title of this role, and Ind 2 distinguishing between the role of marketing and *development* within the school. Development is a term that refers to a high end, strategic form of public relations which focuses on developing opportunities within organisations. This distinction highlights the best understanding of any of the managers within this study, with this manager being the only respondent to have worked outside of education, having worked in journalism whilst also holding a business qualification. However, while this understanding exists, this person is not responsible for the public relations plan within this particular school.

The principal from Ind 1 demonstrated an understanding between different types of public relations practice with a variety of public relations labels such as community relations, publications officers and events officers, however indicated that he did not realise these were public relations roles as he kept using the term marketing to describe the role of this team. As evidenced by various quotes in previous sections, this was a common mistake amongst managers in schools, even the manager who included development in the title of her public relations practitioner.

Table 21.

Table of Titles Held by Public Relations Managers/Practitioners in Schools

School	Title of role
GPS 1	Director of Marketing and Communication and Public Relations
GPS 2	Marketing Manager
GPS 3	Marketing Officer
Ind 1	Community Relations person Publications officer Events and promotions person
Ind 2	Director of Marketing and Development
Cath 1	Public Relations and Marketing
Cath 2	Principal and secretary
State 1	N/A
State 2	One of my deputy principals has that as one of their key responsibilities and that's been the case here for 8 or 9 years.
State 3	N/A

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

Nature of the public relations role in schools

Gaining an understanding of the nature of the public relations role in schools can provide an indication of the importance placed on public relations. This section looks at the nature of the public relations role (if there is one) across the 10 schools included in this study. The nature of the role is analysed according to whether the public relations practitioner is full-time, part-time or non-existent and where possible, whether the person in the role is qualified in public relations (or a related field) and whether this role is internal, external, or both.

Full-time/part-time public relations role in schools

As identified in the previous section, only half of the schools employed a full-time public relations practitioner with a formal title. This clearly came down to resourcing within schools as these five schools were part of the wealthier GPS and other Independent sector, as opposed to the under-resourced Catholic and State sectors. Of the Catholic and State schools in this study, four of the five schools assigned somebody in a part-time capacity to this school. State 1 was the only school not to have anybody employed in some capacity in this position, however as earlier

comments reflect, this principal believed strongly in building relationships himself by being out with the students, staff and parents in the school ground and at cocurricular events (sport, music, debating etc.):

> Most of your PR takes place within the fence. The external stuff is dead easy. The internal stuff is probably a table of contents but far more important. If you haven't sold yourself, if you haven't sold the school to the kids, it's wasted. Because they won't believe it. (State 1)

Qualifications of public relations professionals in schools

While this question was not included in the interview transcript, principals provided an indication of whether the public relations practitioners in their schools were formally qualified in public relations or a related field (as opposed to secretaries or teachers who held the positions in some schools). For the purposes of this study, Table 23 only provides a yes or no response to being qualified as this is all that could be gleaned from the responses. Certainly a study on qualifications of public relations practitioners in schools would provide a very useful indication of the importance given to this role in schools, although this would only probably be relevant in wealthier independent schools to remove the variable of poor resourcing. Within this study, only four of the 10 schools employed public relations practitioners who held relevant or sufficient qualifications to perform strategic public relations.

As outlined in the literature on public relations in schools, three of the 10 schools utilised secretaries to perform the public relations function within their school as shown in Table 22. This could come down to a lack of understanding about what this function could achieve within the school environment, or could be due to the lack of resources which is clearly evident in the previous section which showed the five wealthier schools in this study were the only schools to employ a full-time public relations person. Principals from the two Catholic schools both use their secretaries in performing the public relations function within their schools with the Cath 2 principal stating that his public relations manager (the secretary performing this role) is strategic because she sits on the senior management team. He described the nature of his public relations team as, "It's me really and my secretary, between the two of us and our middle school coordinator, he goes around the other feeder schools just promoting" (Cath 2).

A common misunderstanding among managers across organisations which is also noted in the literature on public relations in schools is that anybody with good people skills could perform the public relations role in schools. This was evidenced in a comment by the principal of Cath 1 who described her "public relations and marketing" person (with no formal title) as follows:

> She's a young woman with lots of life in her so I use her. As I said to someone, you can trot out a few old teachers like myself and the kids are not the slightest bit interested in hearing from you, because they see you in schools all the time. You need to send someone out. If you're trying to project a vibrant young sort of image, well that's what we all know we should be presenting. (Cath 1)

The possible lack of understanding of this role, however, is evidenced by one of these schools (GPS 3) which employs a basketball coach as their public relations-marketing person. This is ironic because the employment of this person came after his full-time, qualified predecessor left to take up another position. This principal had not only seen what a fully qualified public relations practitioner could do, but acknowledged in the interview that she had been "the best he'd ever had":

> The best one I had was [name deleted] and she was a Masters [graduate]... what came out of that girl was just ability... she took no prisoners but she also knew what she was doing and I think that everything picked up. I have to say the time she spent here as short as it was, I was lucky to get that time. And [basketball coach's name deleted] came along to help her and he sort of fell into it. (GPS 3)

This is the same principal who acknowledged the importance of the role public relations plays within the school and the need to invest in this role.

Internal/External practitioners in schools

As shown in Table 22, nine out of the 10 schools utilise an internal public relations practitioner in either a full-time or part-time, and qualified or unqualified, capacity. Of the 10 schools, two utilise external public relations practitioners (GPS 1 and Ind 1). GPS 1 utilises external consultants for specialised strategic functions such as issues and risk management, with the principal noting, "very rarely would we go outside for the writing content" (GPS 1). The principal from Ind 1 also employs

consultants in specialised areas, however, for more technical functions such as media, advertising, the website and publications. This school also has the largest public relations-marketing department of any of the schools as shown in Table 23 and discussed in the next section. The principal from State 1 reinforced how a lack of resources is the reason that he does not employ public relations practitioners in either an internal or external capacity:

> We used to have these students sent out, post grad students, because we could never afford a marketing person. I mean the huge amount of money we spend on non teaching staff, is because, in a school this size, the departmental allocation of non teaching staff is two base grade officers. That's what they give us. That's it, and a number of teacher aides. So it's entirely unrealistic so while we're spending money on that, it's people who look after the real bread and butter issues and therefore we didn't have money to go to those lengths of putting a marketing person in. But the people we had in, it was quite a profit relationship on both sides. They used us as a stepping stone to get a decent job and we got from public relations strategies put in place. It worked well. (State 1)

Size of public relations department in schools

As Table 22 illustrates, in all but one of the schools in this study, public relations was undertaken by one (or fewer) people. One school had a public relations department divided into three distinct roles – community relations, publications, and events and promotions. This school also utilised a consultant for media, advertising, updating its website and some publications. Whether or not this reinforces the manager's understanding is unclear, however, it should be noted that this school was spread over three campuses. The public relations team, however, was based at the main campus of the school.

To further explore the size of the public relations department and potentially how strategic or important the role was considered in the school, principals were asked "who works with the internal public relations person?".

Only one public relations manager (in GPS 2) truly worked within the senior management team as noted by the principal of this school. "The marketing department fits within the structure of the senior leadership team of the school which

is made up of our education leadership team, the business leadership team including marketing within the business leadership team" (GPS 2). This person was also well supported in their function by the registrar of the school (in terms of enrolments), an alumni support person, and a graphic designer. The other two GPS schools, while well resourced, did not include their public relations manager on the senior leadership team, except "when invited". This very much supports what Berger (2005) discussed in terms of public relations practitioners being brought into senior management teams when considered relevant. The GPS 1 principal did identify that his Director of Marketing, Communication and Public Relations worked with members of Executive and other school staff, however, in a technical capacity more so than a strategic capacity.

Table 22.

Table of Nature of Public Relations Role in Schools

School	Internal PR	External consultancy?	Qualified public relations staff	Size of Public Relations department Person/Team	Full-time/ Part-time
GPS 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	One Person	FT
GPS 2	Yes	No	Yes	One Person	FT
GPS 3	Yes	No	No – basketball coach	One Person	FT
Ind 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Team	FT
Ind 2	Yes	No	Yes	One person	FT
Cath 1	Yes	No	No - secretary	One Person	PT
Cath 2	Yes	No	No - secretary	2 x partial roles	PT
State 1	No	Students	N/A	N/A	N/A
State 2	Yes	No	No	One person as part of her other job	PT
State 3	Yes	No	N/A	Casual person	PT

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

5.3.4 Summary

While principals may view public relations as a strategic function in schools and value the contribution it can make in terms of tangible (building image-reputation and sense of community) and intangible (time saver for managers and contributor to success in schools) outcomes, how they use public relations also provides an indication of how "strategic" public relations is considered to be within the school environment. To determine whether public relations was truly viewed as a strategic function in schools, an analysis was conducted into the nature of the public relations role in the schools under investigation in this study. As illustrated in Table 23 and outlined previously, public relations is not used strategically in most schools with only one school meeting the first criteria of strategic public relations in terms of its role in the dominant coalition (or senior management team) of an organisation. Certainly the title of the public relations function in schools also reveals principals do not separate public relations from marketing with only one principal including public relations in the title of his public relations manager (although even in that title, it was listed behind marketing and communication). Most schools only had one person in this role, while two schools had teams dedicated to responding to their external environment, with two other schools bringing in external consultancies to perform specific functions or when needed. Probably most telling, however, was that only four of the 10 schools employed a public relations practitioner who held qualifications in public relations or a relevant discipline.

Table 23.

Prin*cipals' Understanding and Use of 'Strategic' Public Relations*

	Tangible outcomes		Intangible outcomes		Internal/External role		Size of public relations department	Title given to public relations manager/practitioner	Part of dominant coalition
School	Building an organisation's image/reputation	Building a sense of community	Time saver for managers	Contributor to success in schools	Internal PR	External consultancy?	Person/Team	Title of role	Sit on MT
GPS 1	X				Yes	Yes	One person with relevant qualifications	Director of Marketing and Communication and Public Relations	No
GPS 2	X			X	Yes	No	One person with relevant qualifications	Marketing Manager	Yes
GPS 3	X	X	X	X	Yes	No	One person – no qualifications	Marketing Officer	No
Ind 1	X	X			Yes	Yes	Team with relevant qualifications	Community Relations Publications officer Events and promotions	No
Ind 2		X		X	Yes	No	One person with relevant qualifications	Director of Marketing and Development.	No
Cath 1	X				Yes	No	One Person – no qualifications	PR and marketing	No
Cath 2		X	X	X	Yes		2 x partial Roles – no	Principal and secretary	Yes.

	Tangible outcomes		Intangible outcomes		Internal/External role		Size of public relations department	Title given to public relations manager/practitioner	Part of dominant coalition
School	Building an organisation's image/reputation	Building a sense of community	Time saver for managers	Contributor to success in schools	Internal PR	External consultancy?	Person/Team	Title of role	Sit on MT
							qualifications		
State 1					No	Students	N/A	N/A	No
State 2	X		X		Yes	No	One person As part of her other job – no relevant qualifications.	One of my deputy principals has that as one of their key responsibilities and that's been the case here for 8 or 9 years.	No
State 3	X	X		X	Yes	No	Casual person (10 hours per week) – students studying to acquire relevant qualifications.	Unknown	Yes and we also have a strategic public relations and marketing committee in the school.

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

5.4 What Public Relations Strategies are Used in Schools?

A final determinant of whether public relations performs a strategic function in schools is the nature of the strategies performed. While the presence of a public relations plan provides an indication of whether these strategies are part a longer term, planned, coordinated effort, it is worthwhile taking a look at the variety of public relations strategies in schools to see if these are consistent with how managers define public relations' role in the organisation and the importance they place on this function within their schools.

Table 24 illustrates the overall spread of activities identified by principals when asked, "What sorts of activities does your public relations person/department perform?" It should be noted that the following responses may not reflect the full role or list of activities performed by the public relations manager/department in each school either due to the respondents' assumption that this had either already been covered in the interview or was alluded to in their given response to this question. However, as the focus of this study is on the management characteristics of principals, their understanding of public relations and the public relations strategies they adopt, it is interesting to note what public relations activities first come to mind in describing the role performed by their public relations manager/department. This is also important for triangulating back to such questions as what they think public relations is, what it can do for the organisation and whether they think the public relations used in their school is strategic.

Certainly there are a number of patterns evident in Table 24 with 100% of principals identifying that one of the activities performed by their public relations manager/department is working on one or numerous publications. The different types of publications mentioned by each respondent are further broken down in the following section.

Another distinct pattern is that despite their increased capacity to respond to their competitive environment with a full-time staff member and greater resources than their other independent, Catholic and state counterparts, only one of the GPS schools included relationship building in their list of public relations strategies while

all of the remaining schools (the two independent schools and the less resourced Catholic and state schools) made a strong reference to this in their response.

There were also two activities that received a response from only one principal – sponsorship and the school's website. Once again this may not be truly representative of the actual activities performed by the public relations practitioner; nevertheless, these activities were not listed by other managers and thus potentially not considered as a higher priority for those managers.

The only respondent who covered every category was from GPS 2. A broader list of categories may suggest a more considered (strategic), coordinated approach utilising a variety of strategies that reinforce each other and are designed to reach audiences in multiple ways, rather than a more limited focus. The two respondents to list the least tactics were State 3, listing only publications and events as the public relations strategies performed by the school; and Ind 2, listing only publications and building relationships. Building relationships as a category, however can assume a broader strategy which might encompass a number of other strategies. There were several respondents who listed three categories – GPS 1 and GPS 3, the two Catholic schools and State 1 and 2.

While the schools in the Catholic and state sectors may be limited in terms of their public relations strategies due to budgetary restraints, they too listed "building relationships" as an adopted public relations strategy. More notable are the responses by GPS 1 and GPS 2 who both have full-time practitioners and yet both rely on the more technical efforts of publications and advertising to support their public relations effort, with GPS 1 also listing media and GPS 3, listing events. This is perhaps understandable for GPS 3 with a public relations practitioner who does not hold any qualifications in public relations or a related discipline.

Table 24.

Table of Public Relations Activities Adopted by Principals

School	Publica-tions	Events	Media	Adverti-sing	Website	Customer service	Enrol-ments	Building relation-ships	Sponsor-ship
GPS 1	X		X	X					
GPS 2	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
GPS 3	X	X		X					
Ind 1	X		X			X		X	
Ind 2	X							X	
Cath 1	X		X					X	
Cath 2	X			X				X	
State 1	X	X						X	
State 2	X				X			X	
State 3	X	X						X	

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

5.4.1 Publications

As identified in Table 24, 100% of respondents listed some type of publication as being part of the public relations effort within the school. Table 26 breaks this down further to illustrate the type of publications produced by public relations mangers/departments in schools with six out of the 10 respondents listing the school newsletter as being an activity performed by their public relations manager/department. The second most commonly mentioned publication produced by the public relations manager/department was the school prospectus with three out of the 10 respondents specifically mentioning this publication. Apart from a school's website, this document is arguably one of the most important documents for capturing a school's mission and values and communicating those to prospective parents. School brochures further play a role in supporting this document to more specific target audiences, however these were only specifically mentioned by one respondent (although could be assumed in the six "overall publications" responses).

Six out of the 10 respondents listed publications overall with five of these elaborating specifically on the types of publications they produce. Some of these publications could be considered to be more strategic than others in presenting a coordinated, reinforced message to prospective and existing parents and alumni of

each school. Similarly, some of these publications could be considered internal publications for existing parents and alumni (newsletter and different school magazines) as opposed to external audiences such as prospective parents (brochures, prospectus, website, video, media and advertising); and some that cater for both internal and external audiences. The principal from GPS 1 reinforced the importance he places on publications and the role they play in the school community:

> Any correspondence that goes out to all the parents, she has the final editorial say to ensure standard. All publications go through her. It doesn't matter what part of the school, they've got to have her seal to ensure granting and a consistent message. Her role is actually very, very important. She is the director." (GPS 1)

Perhaps this explains the limited strategic approaches (publications, media and advertising) listed by this principal in his response. This also ties in, in part, with his earlier definition of public relations and the role it plays in organisations – while defining it as building relationships, he specifically mentioned in his definition that this is done by the dialogue created with a variety of stakeholders. Certainly his definition, and the list of public relations strategies he immediately thinks of, reinforces publications as his primary strategic approach. "Publications" was also considered a "key approach" by the Ind 2 respondent:

> The publications are important and that's all of our publications – internal and external so that you keep your reputation, getting known, who are you, where are you, what do you do and advancing the reputation of the school all round. That's one of the key things. (Ind 2)

The principal from GPS 2 was once again the respondent with the most categories, although she did not state publications overall. While she did not list either the annual school magazine or the quarterly or half yearly magazines on her list of activities, her response suggests a clear understanding of the full suite of communication materials to reach both internal and external audiences (including the website which was only mentioned by one other respondent). She did not however demonstrate a full understanding of the role the media can play in strategic public relations, taking a more technical view of the media by stating, "Media, I sort of put down as promotions and advertising" (GPS 2).

One category within the publications section was media and advertising, which while technically not a school ”publication”, this category ties in with disseminating the organisation’s message in the same way the organisation’s internal and external publications do. It should be noted that this category includes two different areas within the one column with four respondents listing media and four respondents listing advertising as part of their strategic approach. The advertising category also included a number of different types of advertising from mainstream advertising in newspapers and magazines – on local schools’ community notice boards in shopping centres, roadside billboards and buses. The Cath 2 principal who subscribed to this more varied approach to advertising spoke about the benefits he saw in using buses, “We own buses. I see those buses as a good advertising thing. That’s handy, low cost advertising, the buses are paid for by kids being transported and so it’s just a very free big billboard, driving around” (Cath 2).

Table 25.

Table of Types of Activities Identified by Principals in Relation to Publications

Type of School	Publications								
	School newsletter	Annual school magazine	¼ or ½ yearly magazine	School brochures	School prospectus	School website	School video	Publications overall	Media/ Advertising
GPS 1	X	X	X					X	X
GPS 2	X			X	X	X			X
GPS 3			X		X			X	X
Ind 1	X							X	X
Ind 2								X	
Cath 1		X			X			X	X
Cath 2									X
State 1	X								
State 2	X					X	X		X
State 3	X							X	

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

Once again it should be noted that Table 25 identifies only those publications mentioned by principals and is not representative of their overall publication effort (e.g. only two principals mentioned their website as a strategy, however, all schools in this study have their own website). This table instead provides an indication of those activities that principals are either most aware of or deem most important in terms of the public relations strategies adopted to respond to their changing and highly competitive operating environment.

5.4.2 Building Relationships

Building relationships was the second highest strategic approach principals identified that their school adopts to respond to their competitive environment with seven of the 10 respondents mentioning this particular approach or specific activities which fell under this approach. The reason for the perceived importance of this approach is best summed up by the principal of State 1 who said, "It's like any relationship. It works only as long as you keep making it work and so you have to be out there doing it so you take the whole thing seriously and you keep pushing" (State 1). Despite being a common approach, all but two (GPS 2 and Ind 1) of the eight respondents who identified relationship building strategies, only featured one activity under this banner. The most common relationship building activity identified by respondents was building relationships with local clubs and schools as identified by both independent principals and one state school principal. It should be noted that both Catholic principals identified school visits as being an important relationship building activity with the focus of these being just as much about building relationships with feeder schools as promoting themselves to these audiences.

While some of the other relationship building categories are self explanatory, two categories under this approach that may need further explanation were customer service-welcome approach and gaining feedback. The principal from Ind 1 spoke about the importance of a welcoming approach in his response:

> Being in a position where that contact is positive, welcoming and affirming. Whatever that contact might be, through publications or phone calls or a personal visit or the people of this organisation, when we come into contact with people in the community, that it is affirming and positive and friendly. (Ind 1)

"Gaining feedback" was also identified as a category under relationship building as it links in with the Cutlip et al. (2006) definition of public relations which seeks to build "mutually beneficial relationships" (p. 5). For this to occur, the communication must be two-way and thus gaining feedback from target audiences is a crucial component of any strategic effort which seeks to build relationships by being informed about your target audiences.

GPS 2 seeks to build relationships through customer service-welcoming protocols (as described above) and sponsorship of community events, while Ind 1 also prides itself on its customer service and welcoming protocols, but takes a more strategic focus with the media by building relationships with the media rather than simply using media for publicity. The principal from GPS 2 described the importance of the customer service approach:

> Customer service... it's really marketing which originally raised all staff members' awareness of the whole picture, so it's not just the receptionist or the person who answers the first telephone who has to be mindful of the impression we're giving, but it's the groundsmen and whoever it might be. (GPS 2)

5.4.3 Events

As identified earlier, events form part of a school's relationship building activities. However they have been differentiated based on their promotional efforts as opposed to community outreach activities that build mutually beneficial relationships. Once again, GPS 2 identified the majority of categories within this approach with two events specifically targeted to prospective parents (Open Day and the Independent Schools Expo) and two events designed to build a sense of community (Alumni events and Grandparents Days) listed.

Table 26.

Table of Types of Strategies Identified by Principals in Relation to Building Relationships

Type of school	Relationship building strategies					
	Relationship building with clubs/ schools/ media/internationally	Attending school events	Customer service/ Welcome	School visits	Gaining feedback	Sponsorship
GPS 1						
GPS 2			X			X
GPS 3						
Ind 1	X		X			
Ind 2	X					
Cath 1				X		
Cath 2				X		
State 1		X				
State 2	X					
State 3					X	

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

The most commonly listed event was Open Day which as identified by GPS 2 and GPS 3, as well as State 3. All other events received one response each except for Art Exhibitions, as well as Sporting and Musical Performances which were identified by the principals of State 1 and State 3.

There were five school principals who did not identify any events as part of their strategic approach including all schools in the Independent and Catholic sectors within this study, as well as GPS 1. Once again, this does not mean these schools do not run these events (for example, GPS 1 does run Open Days, Grandparents Days and a variety of art, sporting and musical events), however these were not identified by the principal of this school as an activity performed by the public relations manager/department.

Table 27.

Table of Types of Strategies Identified by Principals in Relation to Events

Type of school	Types of Events						
	Events overall	Open day	Independent schools expo	Information evenings/ Sessions	Art exhibitions/ Sporting/Musical performances	Alumni events & past parent lunches	Grandparents' days
GPS 1							
GPS 2		X	X			X	X
GPS 3		X		X			
Ind 1							
Ind 2							
Cath 1							
Cath 2							
State 1	X				X		
State 2							
State 3		X			X		

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

Table 28.

Comparison of Managers' Characteristics, Their Definition of Public Relations and the Role They See Public Relations Playing in Schools.

	Age	**Education**		**Tenure**	**Experience**	**Definition of Public Relations**			**Tangible outcomes**		**Intangible outcomes**	
School	Age	Highest level of education (UG/PG)	Type of quals.	Tenure/ 5-year contract	Years as principal	Relationship building	Image & reputation	Communication & promotion	Building an organisation's image/reputation	Building a sense of community	Time saver for managers	Contributor to success in schools
GPS 1 Male	51	PG	Education	Contract	13 years	X	X	X	X			
GPS 2 Female	48	PG	Ed Admin	Contract	8 years		X		X	X		X
GPS 3 Male	65	UG	Economics Education	Contract	20+ years	X			X	X	X	X
Ind 1 Male	53	PG	Arts Ed Admin Ed L'drship Theology	Contract	30 years	X			X	X		
Ind 2 Female	45-54	PG	Arts Business Ed L'drship	Contract	6 years (DH)	X						X
Cath 1 Female	52	PG	Ed L'drship	Contract	7 years		X	X	X	X		
Cath 2 Male	55-64	UG	Education	Contract	20+ years			X			X	X
State 1 Male	55-64	UG	Arts Education	Tenure	20+ years	X						
State 2 Male	35-44	PG	Education Management Science	Tenure	11 years	X			X	X	X	
State 3 Male	45-54	UG	Education	Tenure	8 years (AH)			X	X			X

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

5.5 Conclusion

The data collected on the management characteristics of principals confirms that there is no distinct trend according to the type of school they manage except in the area of tenure with only the state school principals enjoying the security of tenure, as opposed to the five year contracts of their nongovernment counterparts. Certainly characteristics of age, education and experience are wide and varied, not only across the four different school types, but within each system. Age is a characteristic that while not showing any apparent trend amongst the principals interviewed in this study, does demonstrate trends across this small sample when combined with other management characteristics such as education, and as one would expect, experience.

Another demographic characteristic that, while not the focal point of this study, shows trends emerging when combined with other management characteristics, is gender. The two characteristics gender most notably links with to show emerging patterns, were education and experience. Every female respondent held postgraduate qualifications with two of the three females holding masters qualifications while the remaining female respondent holds a doctorate. In terms of education, three of the four respondents to hold undergraduate qualifications only were also the three oldest respondents (two in the 55-64 category and one in the 65+ category – see Table 28). While these findings certainly cannot be generalised due to the small sample size, it equally cannot be generalised that managers in GPS schools require higher degrees or a wider range of qualifications than managers in other private or public schools.

As demonstrated by the other three management characteristics, there was a wide range of experience amongst principals across the four types of schools in terms of insider/outsider, level of experience, other career experiences and functional experience. Certainly experience shows strong links with education as a management characteristic with the two working in tandem in some cases, and in opposition in other cases.

Managers from arguably the most competitive schools – the nongovernment sector – have the least security of fixed-term contracts, however as outlined in the literature, the benefits of moving between different schools potentially to their ability to respond or adapt based on a wider variety of experience.

While age on its own did not hold any pattern for managers in each of the four types of schools, it certainly did appear to impact on other variables as an important element in a cluster of management characteristics.

The remainder of this chapter went on to explore principals' understanding of public relations based on their definition of public relations, the contribution or role they considered public relations plays in organisations, and their use of public relations in terms of the nature of the public relations role in their schools and the strategies they have adopted to respond to their changing environment.

Principals defined public relations in three ways based on its relationship building function, its role in building image and reputation and as a communication or promotional function within an organisation with one respondent (GPS 1) listing all three. The most common definition of public relations by principals was 'relationship building, while communication and promotion was the second most common response. While there didn't appear to be any obvious relationship between management characteristics and these definitions, the role of public relations in relationship building was a common theme for most answers given by the older respondents (55+).

Table 28 lines up the management characteristics of principals alongside their understanding or view of public relations and their actual use of public relations in their schools. As evidenced by Table 28, principals' understanding and view of public relations differs between the definitions they have given to public relations and the contribution or role they see it can play in organisations. While their definitions of public relations covered three key areas common in academic public relations definitions, their ideas on the contribution public relations plays in an organisation were broken into two distinct types of outcomes – tangible and intangible outcomes. What was interesting is that the most common tangible

outcome public relations contributes to organisations as identified by principals was "building an organisation's image/reputation" while "image and reputation" was the least common definition provided by principals. The other tangible outcome identified by principals was building a sense of community. This contribution supports the most common definition of public relations provided by six of the 10 principals, however, only half of the responses identified this as a contribution public relations can make to an organisation.

The intangible outcomes public relations is seen to make in schools were that it is a "contributor to success in schools" and is a time saver for managers. Both of these responses are indicative of the environment principals (and their schools) are operating within with principals recognising the need for building relationships, maintaining and building the image or reputation of their school and communicating with key stakeholders (as per their definitions of public relations and what it can do for an organisation). Public relations is therefore seen as a key ingredient or contributor to the success of schools.

The changing environment principals are working within is also resulting in increased demands on principals' time with increasing accountability required by the Federal government in order to receive funding, as well as the ever changing and increasing curriculum and assessment requirements being placed on schools. It is little surprise, therefore that one of the intangible outcomes identified by three principals is that public relations can indeed save them time. Certainly there is recognition by principals that if public relations is fulfilling its role or potential in an organisation, it can save a great deal of time by maintaining the status quo for an organisation that is operating in an increasingly volatile environment. This assumption or identified outcome by principals is certainly consistent with Cutlip, Center and Broom's (2006) definition of public relations role in 'identifying, establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships between an organisation and the publics on whom its success depends" (p.6).

Principals' understanding of public relations was further broken down in terms of how strategic their public relations function by looking at whether a public relations plan was in place in each school and if so, who developed that plan. In all schools this plan was developed by, or in conjunction with, the principal. Grunig's key criteria for strategic public relations is whether the public relations manager sits within the dominant coalition of the organisation. When judging each school according to this criteria, only one school (GPS 2) included the public relations manager (marketing manager) on a senior leadership team.

Finally, principals' understanding and support of public relations was assessed by focusing on the nature of the role within their organisation, the title they assign to their public relations manager, the qualifications of their public relations manager and the size of their public relations department. There was no distinct trend according to the type of school in terms of how public relations was used except that the less resourced Catholic and State schools could not afford to have full-time, fully trained public relations practitioners although one GPS school (GPS 3) while supposedly better resourced than its Catholic or State counterparts, employed a basketball coach to perform its public relations activities. One trend across nine out of the ten schools was that nobody included public relations in the title of their public relations manager, although one school did use the word "development" which is a key area of public relations practice. Even the principal used "public relations" in the title of their public relations manager, used this term in conjunction with "marketing" and "communication".

The final set of findings in this chapter focused on identifying what public relations strategies principals have employed to respond and adapt to their changing environment? Table 29 provides a summary of the public relations activities and subsequent overall strategies used by principals in relation to principals' management characteristics.

Table 29.

What is the Nature of the Relationship Between Management Characteristics and Public Relations Strategies?

	Management Characteristics																		
School	Age	Age became principal	Tenure/ 5-year contract[a]	Years in education	Years as principal	External/ Internal appt.	Highest level of education (UG/PG)	Type of quals. Bus/ Ed/Arts	Publications	Events	Media	Advertising	Building relationships	Building an organisation's image and /reputation	Building a sense of	Time saver for managers	Contributor to success in
GPS 1 Male	51	38	Contract	27 years	13 years	Ext.	PG	Education	X		X	X		X			
GPS 2 Female	48	35-44	Contract	26 years	8 years	Int.	PG	Arts Ed. Admin.	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
GPS 3 Male	65	35-44	Contract	40+ years	20+ years	Ext.	UG	Economics Education	X	X		X		X	X	X	X
Ind 1 Male	53	23	Contract	32 years	30 years	Ext.	PG	Arts Ed Admin Ed Leadership Theology	X		X		X	X	X		
Ind 2 Female	45-54	35-44	Contract	25 years	6 years (DH)	Int.	PG	Ed Leadership Business Journalism	X				X		X		X
Cath 1 Female	52	45	Contract	36 years	7 years	Ext.l	PG	Ed Leadership	X		X		X	X			
Cath 2 Male	55-64	35-44	Contract	40+ years	20+ years	Ext.	UG	Education	X			X	X		X	X	X
State 1 Male	55-64	35-44	Tenure	40+ yrs	20+ years	Ext.	UG	Arts Education	X	X			X				
State 2 Male	35-44	35-44	Tenure	22 years	11 years	Ext.	PG	Education Management Science	X				X	X		X	
State 3 Male	45-54	35	Tenure	29 years	8 years (AH)	Ext.	UG	Education	X	X			X	X	X		X

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study [a] All contracts were five year fixed contracts

As illustrated in Table 29, all respondents listed publications as a public relations activity used within their schools to build relationships, communicate with key stakeholders and maintain their schools' image and reputation. Table 29 also includes the tangible and intangible outcomes identified by principals to identify whether the public relations strategies they have adopted are consistent with the outcomes they are looking to achieve from their public relations efforts. Apart from building relationships, it is clear that many principals rely on the communication activities of publications, media and advertising for the bulk of their public relations efforts. While many respondents identified "building a sense of community" as a tangible outcome of public relations, only four respondents listed "events" as a public relations strategy. Similarly, while not shown in this table, the GPS 1 principal listed relationship building, and building an organisation's image or reputation, however, his strategies were all communication based with events not identified. While this school may run events, this was not identified as being a strategy adopted by the "Director of Marketing, Communication and Public Relations" within this school.

Chapter Six will discuss this further while also providing further analysis into the relationship management characteristics have on the strategies adopted by principals to respond to their changing environment.

CHAPTER SIX
Conclusions and Discussion

Chapter Five presented data that revealed a number of patterns in the management characteristics of school principals. It also outlined their understanding of public relations and the public relations strategies they have adopted within their schools to respond to their changing operating environments. This chapter will discuss the findings from this data in terms of the relationships between management characteristics and public relations strategies adopted in schools to answer the research questions that shape this study. Implications for theory and practice and opportunities for further research will also be explored based on the findings of this study and the review of organisational and public relations literature.

The overriding research problem and research questions guiding this study were:

> *How are management characteristics of principals related to the understanding and use of public relations strategies used in schools?*
>
> *RQ i): What management characteristics do principals demonstrate in schools?*
>
> *RQ ii): What understanding do principals have of public relations?*
>
> *RQ iii): What public relations strategies do principals use?*

6.1 Overview Discussion of Findings

Chapter 5 explored principals' understanding of public relations based on their definition of public relations, the contribution or role they considered public relations plays in organisations, and their use of public relations in terms of the nature of the public relations role in their schools and the strategies they have adopted to respond to their changing environment.

Tables in previous chapters lined up the management characteristics of principals alongside their understanding or view of public relations and their actual use of public relations in their schools. Principals' understanding and view of public relations differs between the definitions they have given of public relations and the contribution or role they see it can play in organisations. Chapter Six will go on to discuss this further while also providing further analysis into the relationship that management characteristics have on the strategies adopted by principals to respond to their changing environment.

Certainly the findings showed that a blend of characteristics had more of an impact on the choice of public relations strategy rather than one variable influencing strategy in isolation. In many cases, managers are choosing a person to enact the role of public relations based on their understanding of the field and then directing the person based on their understanding. This therefore limits the role public relations can play in schools as it is limited to the education and experience the manager has. Only a public relations practitioner sitting on the management team and charged with developing a plan can move beyond managers' understanding unless having some experience with public relations or holding relevant qualifications in public relations or a related field, due to the specialised nature of the discipline. This was evident a number of times throughout this study. The initial reaction all but one of the principals had when asked to define public relations illustrates that public relations is not an area they truly understand. This should not be surprising as the literature provides clear evidence that researchers and practitioners alike struggle to agree on a clear definition of public relations. Principals were clearer on the role or contribution they believed public relations could make in an organisation with one principal (GPS 3) going so far as to claim that this is an area that schools need to invest in more. This principal also saw clear evidence of what public relations can do for an organisation after having a fully trained practitioner working within his school for a number of years with a clear return on investment during the time she was in this role. Once she left, however, she was replaced with a basketball coach who holds no relevant public relations qualifications. This dichotomy was apparent in most schools across the board stemming from a poor understanding of what public relations can really do for an organisation. Apart from J. E. Grunig's (2006) assertion that public relations must be a member of the dominant coalition for public relations to play a

strategic role within a school, it is clear that the principal would also gain and the school's overall strategic planning would gain by seeing first hand what public relations can do for an organisation when strategic planning is fully informed by the understanding of key stakeholders' attitudes and behaviours from within the organisation's operating environment. It is this type of understanding that a public relations practitioner brings to the management table.

Another example of how the principal's understanding of public relations may limit the role and contribution a public relations practitioner makes within the organisation is in looking at the qualifications held by principals, especially those who hold qualifications outside of education (particularly in business) or who have gone on to study postgraduate qualifications in educational administration or educational leadership (which are based in organisational and management theory). While even some of these principals struggled to define public relations, they adopted a wider range of public relations strategies in their organisations and had a more diverse public relations team in charge of communicating and building relationships with their key stakeholders, or both.

6.2 Discussion of Findings Related to Research Question i – What Management Characteristics do Managers Demonstrate in Schools?

As identified above, management characteristics clearly impact on managers' understanding, views and use of public relations in schools. The following section outlines each of the management characteristics under investigation in this study, analysing the findings on each of these characteristics by revisiting the literature outlined in Chapter Two.

6.2.1 Age

As outlined in Chapter Five, age is a characteristic that while not showing any apparent trends on its own, does demonstrate trends when combined with other management characteristics such as education, and as one would expect, experience.

Table 30.

Table of Demographic Management Characteristics

	Age		Tenure	Experience			Education	
School	Age	Age became principal	Tenure/ 5-year contract[a]	Years in education	Years as principal	External/ Internal appt.	Highest level of education (UG/PG)	Type of quals. Bus/ Ed/Arts
GPS 1 Male	51	38	Contract	27 years	13 years	Ext.	PG	Education
GPS 2 Female	48	35-44	Contract	26 years	8 years	Int.	PG	Arts Ed. Admin.
GPS 3 Male	65	35-44	Contract	40+ years	20+ years	Ext.	UG	Economics Education
Ind 1 Male	53	23	Contract	32 years	30 years	Ext.	PG	Arts Ed Admin Ed Leadership Theology
Ind 2 Female	45-54	35-44	Contract	25 years	6 years (DH)	Int.	PG	Ed Leadership
Cath 1 Female	52	45	Contract	36 years	7 years	Ext.l	PG	Ed Leadership
Cath 2 Male	55-64	35-44	Contract	40+ years	20+ years	Ext.	UG	Education
State 1 Male	55-64	35-44	Tenure	40+ yrs	20+ years	Ext.	UG	Arts Education
State 2 Male	35-44	35-44	Tenure	22 years	11 years	Ext.	PG	Education Management Science
State 3 Male	45-54	35	Tenure	29 years	8 years (AH)	Ext.	UG	Education

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

[a] All contracts were five year fixed contracts.

It was also clear from the findings that older principals felt responsible for the public relations in the school, especially the relationship building within the school. This isn't surprising given this is part of their role, however they spoke about this role as being the most important public relations strategy within the school, stressing the importance of "making people feel good about themselves" (whether those people who they want to feel good about the school are students, staff, parents, prospective parents or the surrounding community). Again, this is not surprising except for the fact that this feeling was a recurrent theme amongst the older managers (60+ years of age) in this study, and was not expressed in the same way (if at all) by their younger counterparts.

The review of the literature identified that older decision makers tend to take longer to reach decisions and that they seek greater amounts of information, are able to diagnose the value of information more accurately and are less confident of their decisions and more willing to reconsider them (Taylor, 1975). The findings on managers (principals) in schools, however, found the opposite with the older respondents being very confident, almost to the extent of not being concerned about what others might think as they were all close to retirement.

Hambrick and Mason (1984) further pointed out that older executives are likely to avoid risky decisions because financial and career security are important to them. This was deemed as being not so relevant in a school setting where enrolments and student achievement are more the benchmark. Certainly it was clear that the three oldest respondents felt very comfortable in their positions with state school principals also enjoying the added comfort of tenure.

Age is combined with a number of variables such as education and length of industry experience. Studies show that younger, less experienced, but more educated managers tend to pursue relatively more innovative strategies (Grimm & Smith, 1985; Herrmann & Datta, 2005). This study found that this was the case as seen with three of the younger participants (45-54 age category) demonstrating a greater range of strategies (GPS 2, Ind 1 and Ind 2) and a larger team of specialised individuals (GPS 2 and Ind 1). This was in contrast to the older participants who took greater responsibility for the component of public relations which overlaps with the role of principal which is that of "meet and greet" relationship building that is done at functions, sporting and music performances, being out and about in the school yard and so forth.

Table 31.

Breakdown of Principals' Gender and Age of Principals against Public Relations Strategies in Schools.

School	Gender	Age	Age became principal	Publications	Events	Media	Advertising	Website	Customer service	Enrolments	Building relationships	Sponsorship
GPS 1	Male	51	38	X		X	X					
GPS 2	Female	48	35-44	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
GPS 3	Male	65	35-44	X	X		X					
Ind 1	Male	53	23	X		X			X		X	
Ind 2	Female	45-54	35-44	X							X	
Cath 1	Female	52	45	X		X					X	
Cath 2	Male	55-64	35-44	X			X				X	
State 1	Male	55-64	35-44	X	X						X	
State 2	Male	35-44	35-44	X				X			X	
State 3	Male	45-54	35	X	X						X	

Note.Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

6.2.2 Education

Certainly the findings within this study supported the literature related to education. The level of education has consistently been linked to receptivity of innovation (Kimberly & Evanisko, 1981). Dollinger (1984) suggests that more educated managers are likely to engage in boundary spanning, tolerate ambiguity and show ability for "integrative complexity" (p. 353). Thomas et al. (1991) found that CEOs of prospector firms had more education than CEOs of defender firms. Wiersema and Bantel (1992) found that more educated managers are likely to be open to changes in corporate strategy. Education in general, and professional management education in particular, emphasises application of analytic techniques to decision making, compared to the more risk-prone judgements of "self-made" executives (Goll & Rasheed, 2005). The findings in this study also showed that more highly educated managers were more likely to adopt a wider range of public relations strategies and while still maintaining the overall control of the public relations manager (who was not part of the dominant coalition), they were happy to engage in a wider range of strategies performed by their public relations manager.

6.2.3 Tenure

Hambrick and Fukutomi (1991) have argued that long-tenured CEOs become excessively committed to a managerial paradigm. It was certainly clear from the findings that while two of the oldest respondents were not on tenure, they were not willing to change "for anybody" (GPS 3). Each of them regarded their respective schools as their last school prior to retiring so they enjoyed a similar situation as those who enjoy tenure in the sense that they were not so concerned about their job security and were very much more committed to their way of doing things. As GPS 3 commented, he "would not be changing for anyone and will not go back to a role of working for anyone again after assuming the role as boss" (GPS 3).

Similar to long-term organisational tenure, long industry tenure is positively associated with an increase in industry-specific knowledge (Govindarajan, 1989). This is seen to be useful when implementing an efficiency focused strategy but provides a restrictive knowledge base to draw from when facing a problem

(Strandholm et al., 2004). As discussed already, this was once again evidenced by older principals who took a lot of the responsibility for relationship building themselves. While this may have been deemed "efficient", they lacked the breadth in their strategic approach and willingness to embrace the full potential of public relations even when they clearly understood (or had seen) what it could do for an organisation. This notion of industry tenure was further explored by Gupta (1984) who found that the longer executives have worked in a particular industry, the more familiar they are likely to be with its structure and prevailing/potential competitive strategies. In this study, this didn't show up so much although it was difficult to compare the different respondents as apart from the three oldest respondents, the other respondents shared a similar length of experience. As such, this study did not appear to shed light on how this characteristic is related to adoption of strategic public relations beyond the lack of breadth demonstrated by older principals who had more than 40 years experience in education and were close to retirement.

6.2.4 Experience

Grimm & Smith (1991) found that managers recruited from outside the organisation initiate change and determine the new strategic direction for their firm. It is difficult to make comment on this as this was not a focus of this study. To ascertain whether each school had changed direction since their principal was appointed from another school, I would need to speak to staff and look at documents which is beyond the scope of this study. Having said that, some principals spoke about the direction they took when they commenced in their current position, including State 1, who noted that his role was to regain the strong reputation that the school had lost prior to his appointment. Similarly, the GPS 3 principal spoke about the dramatic decline in enrolments in the 10 years prior to his appointment. Both of these principals were two of the oldest principals in this study and while noting the challenges they faced when they first commenced in their position, only State 1 identified how he intended to face that challenge, through his relationship building approach. While the GPS 3 principal was not so specific, he also spoke about the importance of relationships to ensure that all stakeholders had a positive association with the school. These "shifts", however, were based more on these principals' personal traits than any defined strategic direction for their school. Certainly, less observable, psychographic

characteristics would prove to be a very interesting variable to look at in investigating how managers (principals) of schools have chosen to respond to their changing operating environment.

In contrast, Tushman & Rosenkopf (1996) found that insiders are more likely to maintain an organisation's existing strategy than outsiders. Further, executives who have made it to the top from within the organisation tend to have a very restricted knowledge base from which to formulate corporate responses to environmental changes (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) while outsiders are thought to have a wider knowledge base.

A study by Boeker (1997) also provided strong evidence that when firms recruit a new CEO from outside the organisation, they tend to initiate strategic changes that lead the firm to resemble the CEOs prior employer (Sambharya, 1996). This was difficult to measure within this study, however, once again this (insider/outsider) variable, has potential tie-ins with another variable referred to in the literature as "other experiences managers have had in their career" as outlined further below.

6.2.5 Functional Experience

The way an executive defines the problem facing the company determines the range of strategies pursued by the organisation. This definition is biased by the functional specialisation of the top executive and influences the course of action adopted (Chaganti & Sambharya, 1987; Dearborn & Simon, 1958). Managers' interpretations or perceptions of their organisation's external environment are influenced by their own backgrounds and experiences (Daft & Weick, 1984; Dutton & Jackson, 1987).

6.2.6 Other Career Experiences

Executives cope with the inherent complexity of strategic decision making by referring to their pre-existing beliefs about appropriate strategic behaviour which is shaped by prior experience in similar roles (Boeker, 1997; Geletkanycz & Black, 2001; Geletkanycz & Hambrick, 1997).

While managers' experience was shown to predict the direction of strategic change in an organisation (Boeker, 1997; Geletkanycz & Hambrick, 1997), the study by (Westphal & Fredrickson, 2001) suggested the influence of managers over strategy could mask the influence of boards.

6.3 Discussion of Findings Related to RQ ii: Management Understanding of Public Relations

As identified earlier, while principals may view public relations as a strategic function in schools and value the contribution it can make in terms of tangible (building image/reputation and sense of community) and intangible (time saver for managers and contributor to success in schools) outcomes, how they use public relations also provides an indication of how strategic public relations is considered to be within the school environment. To determine whether public relations was truly viewed as a strategic function in schools, an analysis was conducted into the nature of the public relations role in the schools under investigation in this study. As outlined previously, public relations is not used strategically in most schools with only one school meeting the first criterion of strategic public relations in terms of its role in a senior management team of an organisation. Certainly the title of the public relations function in schools also reveals principals do not separate public relations from marketing with only one principal including public relations in the title of his public relations manager (although even in that title, it was listed behind marketing and communication). Most schools only had one person in this role, while two schools had teams dedicated to responding to their external environment, with two other schools bringing in external consultancies to perform specific functions or when needed. Probably most telling, however, was that only four of the 10 schools employed a public relations practitioner who held qualifications in public relations or a relevant discipline.

As discussed in Chapter Two, one of the few studies to explore managers' understanding and support of public relations was Pollack's (1986) study which tested management understanding and support of the public relations function against J. E. Grunig's (2006) four models of public relations practice. This study was based

on two distinct variables that coincided with J.E. Grunig's criteria for public relations to serve as a management function within an organisation – public relations' involvement in the dominant coalition (in terms of being part of the top management team within an organisation), and the role of the public relations practitioner in developing public relations strategy in response to a changing or competitive environment.

Public relations' role in the decision making within the organisation was broken up by Pollack (1986) into a number of variables which also showed that the role of public relations is not understood well or supported as a management function by managers in schools (Grunig, J. E. & Grunig, 1989, p. 52). Such variables can be directly correlated with interview questions within this study as shown in Table 32.

Pollack found one of the factors that provided the greatest correlation with management support of J. E. Grunig's (1992) two-way symmetrical model was public relations' representation in the dominant coalition. Chapter Five highlighted that only one school included public relations within the senior management team. It therefore did not appear to be understood or supported well as a management function by most of the principals within this study. It is clear from these findings that full management support of public relations as a strategic function is not evident within most of the schools under investigation within this study. As noted in Chapter Two by Berger (2005), however, there is not necessarily one single dominant coalition within an organisation with different coalitions of strategic managers developed for different decisions. Berger's findings identified that public relations practitioners tended to be included as a member of these coalitions when its expertise was relevant to a decision. This was certainly supported within schools with two principals calling in their public relations practitioners when they felt it was "relevant".

Table 32.

Application of Pollack's Criteria for Assessing Managers' Understanding and Support of Public Relations.

Pollack's variable for assessing management understanding and support of public relations.	**Corresponding question in this study**	**Findings within this study**
Authority level of the public relations department. Involvement of the public relations department manager in major decisions. Influence of public relations department in organisational decision making. Percentage of recommendations made by the public relations department that were implemented by the organisation.	Does the public relations manager sit on the/a Senior Management Team? Not covered in this study – this is certainly an area that would be useful for further research in this area.	Yes 1 No 9 Not evident. Not evident.
Whether public relations decisions are made by the public relations director or top management.	Who is responsible for developing the public relations plan?	No PR Plan = 4 Principal only = 0 PR practitioner only = 0 PR prac. & princ. = 3 PR prac. & Board = 1
How important the dominant coalition believes public relations is to organisational success	What do you think public relations can do for an organisation? How do you think public relations contributes to an organisation's success?	Time saver for managers = 3 Build an organisation's image/reputation = 7 Build a sense of community = 5 Contribute to the success in schools = 5

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study

Another factor that correlated highly with management support of public relations in Pollack's study was the autonomy of the public relations department. A number of researchers (Ehling et al., 1992; Grunig, J. E., 2006; Holder & Ehling, 1967; Hutton, 1999) supported this autonomy or empowerment of the public relations function asserting that it should exist within a horizontal structure alongside other management functions such as marketing, human resources and so forth to make a unique contribution to strategic management, rather than playing a sublimated role within a vertical structure under marketing or management itself. It was clear from the findings in Chapter Five, that public relations in the schools under investigation in this study, very much plays a sublimated role to marketing as

evidenced by the constant reference to the profession as marketing, and the titles of the public relations practitioners within each school.

There was also substantial support for the need for the empowerment of public relations in the literature on encroachment – that is, the assignment of public relations roles to individuals without public relations training (Lauzen, M. M., 1991; Lauzen & Dozier, 1992). Hutton (1999) attributes this encroachment to public relations' identity crisis due to the failure of public relations scholars and practitioners to agree on the fundamental nature and scope of the discipline.

Another indication of managers' understanding and support of public relations identified in Chapter Five was based on the qualifications and nature of those conducting public relations within schools with less than half of the schools employing full-time, fully qualified public relations practitioners. Such findings further suggest the lack of management understanding and support of the role public relations can play in responding to a changing and increasingly competitive environment. A number of studies in Chapter Two found that even in the most favourable conditions for management to call on public relations to perform as a management function – a turbulent environment, a participative culture within the organisation in which management values collaboration with publics – practitioners were lacking the skills to perform a boundary spanning role. Certainly this role was not evident within the public relations departments of any of the schools under investigation within this study. As Berger (2005) noted, only those public relations professionals who possess such managerial skills, sufficient experience and a managerial perspective were more likely to make it into the inner circle. Certainly this will not occur in schools where encroachment of the public relations function by secretaries (Cath 1), teachers (Cath 2) and basketball coaches (GPS 3) occurs.

6.3.1 Public Relations Strategies Most Valued by Managers

The final means to consider management's understanding and support of the role public relations can play in schools was by looking at how public relations strategies are used in schools. The findings within Chapter Five provided significant support for Broom and Smith's (1979) two-way dichotomy of how public relations is

practised in organisations with practitioners in all but one of the schools clearly performing at the level of communication technician – a role with little correlation to most of the management and decision-making measures identified in Chapter Two. Of the three management functions identified in Chapter Two (in order from those demonstrating the greatest management and decision-making measures to the least) – Expert Prescriber, Communication Facilitator and Problem-Solving Process Facilitator – none of the schools fell into the higher two categories with only GPS 2 showing any evidence of the lowest management function, the Problem-Solving Process Facilitator.

In addition to Pollack's (1986) and Berger's (2005) criteria for managers' understanding and support of public relations, Chapter Two also identified six public relations approaches that CEOs identified as contributing most to strategic management – regular research activities, research to answer specific questions, other formal approaches to gathering information; informal approaches to gathering information; contacts with knowledgeable people outside the organisation; and judgement based on experience. Once again the school that identified the most of these activities was GPS 2, however it was clear that this research was directed by the principal.

While Chapter Five noted that some schools engaged in formal research, most of this was directed by the principal with the final three informal methods listed above, also being undertaken by the principal. So while in some cases, public relations practitioners in schools implemented research activities, these activities were predominantly at the direction of the principal. Thus the contribution to the strategic management by public relations in schools under J. E. Grunig's (2006) six criteria was low. Grunig also found that all six contributions increased dramatically in organisations where management highly values public relations This further supports the suggestion that potentially principals do not value the role public relations can play in schools as this was not evident in most of the schools under investigation in this study.

6.4 Discussion of Overall Research Question – What is the Relationship Between Management Characteristics and Strategy

It is clear that when interpreted against other studies as outlined in the review of literature in Chapter Two, the findings within this study suggest that public relations is not well understood or supported by managers (principals) in schools. The only exception was in one school under investigation in this study which was managed by one of the youngest, female respondents who held postgraduate qualifications in educational administration. This manager, however, also demonstrated the least functional experience having served in only one system of education as opposed to some of her male counterparts with greater experience who had served in multiple systems either interstate or internationally.

Certainly there seemed little correlation between managers adopting a strategic public relations approach and the length or type of experience they held. There were trends, however, in terms of age with the older principals taking ownership and responsibility for the public relations, especially the relationship building strategies within their schools.

While not a variable picked up within the literature, certainly there was a small trend amongst the female respondents as opposed to the male respondents with the level and type of education and experience being quite varied amongst the male respondents, while being quite similar amongst the female respondents. One hundred percent of the female respondents held postgraduate qualifications, with all three having completed a Masters in Educational Administration or Leadership. Similarly, the female respondents had the least experience as they had taken time off to have families.

It was also clear that the female respondents within this study demonstrated the greatest understanding of public relations as a management function with two out of the three female respondents identifying a greater breadth of public relations strategies in response to an increasingly competitive, changing environment. The other female respondent, however, managed a Catholic school with few resources to invest in a full-time, qualified practitioner.

The manager with the largest public relations department was a male principal from the independent sector who had four practitioners performing functions of a communication technician – graphic artist, public relations officer, community relations manager and events and promotions officer. This principal also utilised an external consultancy to deal with the media.

6.5 Contribution to Theory and Practice

6.5.1 Theoretical Contribution

This study has sought to extend the literature in public relations by exploring managers' characteristics and how these impact on how managers choose public relations strategies. To date, while there is a call that public relations is a management function, there is little literature on how and why organisational managers use public relations. This study has sought to address this gap by identifying what characteristics school principals demonstrate in conjunction with their understanding of public relations and the role it can play in schools. This can shed insights into understanding how public relations practices are used to respond to the variety of changes in the environment within the education sector. Further, this study has sought to add to claims that public relations should be a management function. This study explored how organisational managers themselves decided how and why public relations should be strategically used as part of the management of the organisation. It did this by drawing on existing literature on managers' characteristics as determinants of organisational strategy. As such, this study contributes to the public relations literature by explicating the normative claims about the role of public relations in organisations.

6.5.2 Practical Contribution

At a practical level, this study has implications for decision makers (principals) within schools in terms of building an understanding of the role public relations can play in strategically communicating with key stakeholders and how they manage relationships between the organisation and these groups in their social and competitive environment. Examining how public relations is viewed by managers in

organisations such as schools also provides public relations practitioners with a useful point of reference in their choice (and explanation of) strategic options available to organisations within a changing population for adapting to increased competition or other changes in the environment the organisation operates within.

This research is the first step in gaining an understanding of the relationship between management characteristics and how these impact on the role public relations plays in organisations. This understanding is critical if public relations is to overcome its identity crisis and the shortfalls it has experienced in practice, and step up to fulfil the management function it needs to assume in organisations as so clearly articulated in the most commonly cited definitions and theories within the discipline. However, as the literature reveals, this is only the first step. Practitioners must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to meet this ideal if public relations is truly going to demonstrate its value in organisations. The value that organisations will gain when public relations is firmly entrenched as a management function, is the one thing all scholars and practitioners in the discipline agree on.

The findings in this study do not suggest there would be a great deal of support for the literature on management characteristics in isolation. Perhaps this was due to this study being placed in a school setting. Certainly the findings showed that a blend of characteristics had more of an impact on the choice of public relations strategy rather than one variable influencing strategy in isolation (e.g. managers' experience and education, age and experience etc.). Trends were evident, however, due to the size of this study these trends would need further investigation. Further research on each of the noted trends would certainly be interesting to gain a further understanding of the impact of managers' characteristics on the choice of public relations strategies employed by managers in schools.

6.6 Opportunities for Further Research

There are a number of opportunities for further research raised by this study.

6.6.1 Management Characteristics

Gender was not a characteristic that was clearly evident within the literature on management characteristics, however, this is certainly a variable that is worthwhile exploring based on some of the trends that emerged from this study, especially in conjunction with age, education and length of experience. There is little doubt that gender may impact on strategy choice. At the very least, it does inter-relate with other management characteristics in impacting on strategy as seen in this study.

6.6.2 Resources

As noted in Chapter Two, Hatten et al. (1978) found that different organisations compete differently within the same industry based on managers' unique perception of the environment, and Kim & Lim (1988) found that different firms in the same industry faced different environmental constraints and contingencies. There is also little doubt that the level of resources within the organisation impacts on the strategy choice. This leads to another area of organisational literature on structure and resources within organisations that could further be explored in relation to the findings within this study.

6.6.3 Managers' Support and Understanding of Public Relations

As identified in Chapter Two, very little has been done to understand managers' support and understanding of public relations. This study sought to do this using Pollack's (1986) variables for measuring managers' support. This work needs to be built on across a wide range of industries to further understand how managers view public relations and how well they understand the role it can play in organisations.

This work would further be enhanced by measuring these variables against a range of management characteristics as larger studies could identify distinct trends that could be useful not only in understanding managers, but in helping managers understand what public relations can do for an organisation.

J. E. Grunig (2006) noted that the dominant coalition can be made up of internal and external members from all levels on the organisational hierarchy. Berger (2005) found that there is no single dominant coalition in an organisation. Instead, different coalitions of strategic managers are developed for different decisions with public relations included as a member of these coalitions when its expertise was relevant to a decision. Despite this study only being limited to 10 schools, it is evident that the structural make up of schools, and where public relations sits within that make up, is wide and varied. Certainly a wider study of structure in schools, and where public relations sits within this structure on various senior management teams, would be valuable in exploring Berger's findings further.

This then turns the focus on the challenge to lift public relations practitioners' level of knowledge to the strategic level that it needs to be (Grunig, J. E., 2006) to reach the full potential of this role in schools, and organisations in general. The challenge for scholars, educators and practitioners is to learn how to institutionalise strategic public relations as an ongoing, accepted practice in most organisations.

6.6.4 Psychographic Management Characteristics

While this study focused on demographic characteristics as these are easily observed in principals (through interviewing and other data collection methods), psychographic management characteristics could prove to be highly relevant in a school setting with the personality of the school often said to reflect the personality of the principal. Certainly such traits would be relevant when exploring public relations strategies used in schools as psychographic characteristics would have a strong bearing on one of the key functions of public relations – building relationships.

6.6.5 Board Effects

While not a focus of this study, the literature also spoke about other levels of analysis of the impact different levels of management (the senior management team and the Board) have on the formulation of strategy. What appear to be executive effects on corporate strategy, may actually be board effects (Westphal & Fredrickson, 2001)

and therefore suggest upper echelons research should devote greater attention to how boards of directors may determine the relationships between top management characteristics, the choice of public relations strategies adopted and organisational outcomes.

Prior evidence that demographic characteristics of top managers predict corporate strategy and performance may result from the influence of board preferences on both executive selection and strategic change. This is certainly an area which requires further investigation in schools with the GPS, Independent and Catholic school principals all directly answering to boards and higher bodies, or both, within their respective systems. The level and type of control that boards hold in each particular school would be both interesting and valuable in pursuing Westphal and Frederickson's (2001) notion of devoting greater attention to how boards of directors may determine the relationship between top management characteristics and organisational outcomes.

6.7 Limitations of this Study

Based on the small sample size, the findings of this study can by no means be generalised across schools throughout Queensland, and definitely not across Australia. To conduct further research in any of the areas identified, larger sample sizes would need to be obtained within each system, across the various types of schools and with a great equivalence of females and males to measure some of the potential trends that emerged within this study relating to gender. In addition, the use of schools as a site for study may not replicate to other organisations and industries.

6.8 Conclusion

This study sought to investigate how management characteristics were related to the use and choice of strategic public relations. It examined this in a qualitative study of Queensland schools. The thesis presented data and discussed findings related to this question that have implications for public relations theory and practice and open the way for further research in this area.

This study did not reveal any clear indication of support for the literature on management characteristics in isolation. Perhaps this was due to this study being placed in a school setting. The findings did, however, show that a blend of characteristics had more of an impact on the choice of public relations strategy rather than one variable influencing strategy in isolation (e.g. managers' experience and education, age and experience etc.). There were trends evident, however due to the size of this study these trends would need further investigation. Further research on each of the noted trends would certainly be interesting to gain a further understanding of the impact of managers' characteristics on the choice of public relations strategies by managers in schools.

This study also raised concerns about how public relations is being practiced in educational settings (Zoch et al., 1997). While this study used and confirmed some components of Broom and Dozier's (1979) two role dichotomy, it went further to look at characteristics of public relations practitioners in schools with a focus on education and encroachment into public relations roles by staff with no public relations training such as teachers "promoted out of the classroom" (p. 371), secretaries and basketball coaches. The reasoning schools provided for such encroachment was to maximise resources by having staff perform a number of roles. The concern of Zoch et al. however, was "the question of whether diluting the public relations function is successfully stretching resources, or is harming relations with essential publics" (p. 373). Further Zoch et al. state that when encroachment takes place "public relations is relegated to a technical or supporting function and is no longer itself considered a management function" (p. 363).

Changes in the way public relations is practised in schools will only come about by improving managers' understanding of public relations. While management characteristics such as education and experience were shown to have an impact on the breadth of strategies managers adopted to respond to their changing environment, it was clear that managers' understanding of public relations and what it can do for an organisation, probably had the greatest impact on their choice of strategies. Table 33 explores the relationship between management characteristics and managers' use of public relations.

Table 33.

Relationship between Management Characteristics and Managers' Use of Public Relations

Type of School	M/F	Age	Tenure	Experience		Education – No. of types & Level of highest qual.		Definition of public relations			Internal/ External role		Size of PR department	Title given to PR Manager/ Practitioner	Part of dominant coalition	PR plan	Number & type of strategic approaches			
			Y/N	Insider/Outsider	Length of experience	Type	Level	R B	I & R	C & P	Internal PR	External consultancy					Publications	Media/ Advertising	Events	Building relation-ships
GPS 1	M	51	N	Outsider	27 yrs	1	PG	X	X	X	X	X	1	Dir of M, C & PR	N	Y	X	X		
GPS 2	F	48	N	Insider	26 yrs	2	PG		X		X		2	MM	Y	Y	X	X	X	X
GPS 3	M	65	N	Outsider	40+ yrs	2	UG	X			X		1	MM	N	N	X	X	X	
Ind 1	M	53	N	Outsider	32 yrs	4	PG	X			X	X	4	MM	N	Y	X	X		X
Ind 2	F	45-54	N	Insider	25 yrs	2	PG	X			X		1	Dev.	N	Y	X			X
Cath 1	F	52	N	Outsider	36 yrs	1	PG		X	X	X		1	Unknown	N	N	X	X		X
Cath 2	M	55-64	N	Outsider	40+ yrs	1	UG			X						N	X	X		X
State 1	M	55-64	Y	Outsider	40+ yrs	2	UG	X								N	X		X	X
State 2	M	35-44	Y	Outsider	22 yrs	3	PG	X								N	X			X
State 3	M	45-54	Y	Outsider	29 yrs	1	PG			X	X		1/4	Unknown	N	N	X		X	X

Note. Developed by researcher for the purposes of this study.

While not so evident in Table 33, age also was shown to impact on the choice of strategies with older participants (with undergraduate qualifications and close to retirement or on tenure in their last school) "sticking to what they know" ("meet and greet" relationship building activities) and what they could control. Table 33 does demonstrate, however, that most management characteristics had no bearing on the type of school principals managed. The exception to this finding was tenure, with all state school principals on tenure. There was also an obvious link between tenure and age that did not support the literature. Previous studies have indicated older managers tend to be less confident in their decisions. This certainly was not the case with the older principals in this study who were close to retirement (their own enforced tenure). This variation between the literature and the findings in this study could point to the difference in the "bottom line" that schools have to meet as opposed to other types of organisations. The type of school also impacted on the nature of the public relations role within each school and the types of strategies adopted more so due to the limited resources of some schools as opposed to others.

While this study was exploratory in nature and in no way generalisable, it did reveal a number of areas that require further investigation to gain a deeper understanding of how and why managers choose public relations strategies as a response to changes in their operating environment. More work needs to be done on looking at both demographic and psychographic management characteristics based on some of the trends that were apparent in this study, especially in relation to traditional measures of managers' understanding and support of public relations. Probably the most relevant criteria to test this understanding and support (alongside management characteristics) are Pollack's (1986) criteria as these provided the most solid framework in the literature for assessing the strategic nature of public relations in schools. In addition, while attempting to analyse principals' understanding and support of public relations, it became clear that principals value the contribution public relations makes in an organisation in two ways – in terms of tangible and intangible outcomes. Certainly this may provide an alternative framework for attempting to understand how managers view public relations and the role it can play in an organisation, especially when placed alongside organisational literature on the relationship between strategy choice and return on investment. Identifying different

frameworks to gain a better understanding of managers' understanding and support of public relations in schools in conjunction with management characteristics will hopefully allow public relations scholars and practitioners alike gain an understanding of how and why managers use public relations strategies. It would be hoped that by answering this question, public relations scholars and practitioners may move a little closer to solving public relations' identity crisis. Only then, can those in public relations expect managers to understand the strategic role public relations can play in organisations so that the discipline may step out from marketing's shadow.

APPENDIX

Interview Proforma

Date

Organisation

Interviewee's name* (Your personal details will not be used in the thesis or analysis of data. Full details are in the accompanying information package)
Interviewee's title*

Location

Start time Finish time

Part A: Opening questions

1. What makes a successful school?

2. What would you see as being the measures of a successful school?

- *Full enrolments*
- *Long waiting lists*
- *Curriculum offerings*
- *Excellent facilities*
- *Strong co-curricular programs*
- *High OPs*
- *Other…*

3. What do you believe are the main contributors to a successful school?

   Of these, which would you say are most important?

4. Has that definition of a successful school changed for you since you first took on the role of Principal/Headmaster?

   If so, in what way(s)?

What type of **reputation** do you think your school has/What do you feel your school is known for?

How does your school differentiate itself from others?

Part B: Managers' Characteristics

How many years have you been in education?

When did you first become a Principal/Headmaster?

May I ask what age bracket you fell into at that time? This is an optional question which they might prefer to circle on the sheet themselves.

25-34
35-44
45-54
55-65

I want to ask you about **how you feel you have changed throughout your time as a Principal/Headmaster?**

- In leadership style
- In the way you make decisions
- In the priorities you set within the school(s) you've lead.
- In any other ways?

Do you hold tenure in this position or are you on a fixed contract?

Was your appointment into this position an internal appointment or did you come from another school?

What positions did you hold in education before becoming a Principal/Headmaster – what was your progression to the position in this school and others?

Have you worked in any other areas outside of education?

Do you hold post-graduate qualifications?

If so, to what level and in what area?

Education – Masters/Doctorate
Educational Administration – Masters/Doctorate
Other…

What undergraduate qualifications do you hold?

Education
Science
Humanities
Other…

USE THIS AS A LINK BY USING MY STUDY TO GO INTO THEIR UNDERSTANDING OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Part C: Public Relations

What do you think public relations is?

What do you think public relations can do for an organisation?

Do you have an internal marketing or **public relations** person/department? Yes/No

If there is only one person, what is that person's title?

_____

How strategic do you think this role is in responding to the increased competition in the education sector?

Does this person sit on the senior management team of the school? Yes/No

Who else belongs to the senior management team?

Does the school have a public relations/marketing plan? Yes/No

If a department exists within the school, what do you call that department?

Public relations
Marketing
Development
Other…

How many people work in that department? _____

What positions (titles) do they hold?

What sorts of activities does your marketing/public relations person/department perform?

Probes:
School Newsletter?
Media?
Building Relationships (with who?)?
General communication?
Community engagement?
Developing an overall communication strategy?

How do you decide what to do in terms of pr?

How do you decide what goes in those newsletters?

Part D: Decision Making

How do you make decisions about what public relations approach to adopt in your school?

Who is involved in making these decisions?

Public relations/marketing person/team
Consultants
Headmaster
Senior Management Team
School Board

What role does the public relations person/team have in this process?

How does this person/team go about developing this approach?

Based on your direction/the direction of the senior exec./or the direction of the board
Based on feedback from parents
Based on an issue(s) the school may be facing
Based on what's happening outside the school
Based on what other schools are doing
Other…

Who has the final say on what public relations approach to adopt?

Public relations/marketing person/team
Consultants
Headmaster
Senior Management Team
School Board

Do you conduct any types of formal/informal research as a basis for making decisions on your public relations strategy?

Yes/No

If so, what types of research do you conduct?

Informal monitoring of parents
Formal surveys to parents
Formal surveys to prospective parents
Environmental scanning of overall environment or _____ environment
Other types of research…

What budget do you assign to public relations/marketing/advertising?

_____

Who sources that budget?

Public relations person
Headmaster
Other…

Who approves the budget? _____

Of this budget, what component would you estimate you devote to:

Advertising _____

Research _____

Printed materials _____

Events _____

Other _____

Is your school board involved in any of these decisions? Yes/No

If so, what types of decisions does the board get involved in?

How would you describe the role of the board?

Part E: I would like to focus our questions on some particular topics now.

Timeframe: 1980 – 2006

How would you describe your school's **strategy** or approach to increased competition?

What public relations strategies do you think have been most successful in your school?

In your time in education, do you feel the education sector has changed in any way?

If so, how do you feel it has changed?

Socially
Politically
Focus of Curriculum
Expectation of Parents
Through technological changes
Economically
Increased competition
Legally

So how do you develop strategy for the organisation?

How do you incorporate these changes, have you incorporated those factors into your decisions?

This **environment** is impacted of course by *political* changes, *social* factors, *technological* changes, *economic* changes and of course, the *competitive* environment. Of these, which do you think has impacted most on the education sector?

If you were to rank these elements of the environment by their impact on education or more specifically on schools, which has had the greatest impact over the past 10-20 years?
Political
Social
Technological
Economic
Competitive

In what way?

How do you find out about what's happening in the broader environment?
IS THIS ASKING THE SAME THING AS THE QUESTION BELOW?

How have you monitored the changes in these various elements of the environment?
Probes:
Industry briefings/publications?
N*etworking/conferences?*
Media/newsletters?
Surveys?
Contact with parents and the broader community?

Do you think the **competitive** environment has impacted on education within your career in education?

If so, how?

How has the competitive environment changed?

What does **competition** mean for you?

Do you think competition for enrolments has increased for your school?

How has this impacted your school?

Who would you see as your main competitors?

How have you responded to that competition?
Probes:
Changes in curriculum?
Restructuring departments?
Building new facilities?
Employing new specialist staff (teaching, administrative staff or executives)
Changes in your marketing or public relations efforts?

Do you think changes in the competitive environment have impacted on your school's marketing/public relations strategy activities?

If so, how?

How do you make decisions about how you respond to the competitive environment?

As a Headmaster, how important do you think it is to monitor the competitive environment?

Do you do this or is there a person within your organisation responsible for this?

If another person does, who is it (title)?

Since the early 80s, do you think the **social** environment has impacted on education within your career in education?

If so, how?

What changes have you seen within the social environment that have impacted on education?

Do you feel these changes have impacted on schools you have run?

If so, how?

Strategically, how have you sought to respond to such events?

How do you make decisions about how you respond to the social environment?

Do you think changes in the social environment have impacted on your school's marketing/public relations strategy/activites?

If so, how?

As a Headmaster, how important do you think it is to monitor the social environment?

Do you do this or is there a person within your organisation responsible for this?

If another person does, who is it (title)?

If monitored, how is the social environment monitored?

How do you think the **technological** environment has impacted on education within your career in education?

If so…

What specific changes have you seen within the technological environment that have impacted on education within this period?

How do you feel these events have impacted on schools you have run?

Have you been able to use changes in the technological environment within schools?

If so, how?

Through curriculum offerings
Through delivery of curriculum methods
Communicating with parents – if so, how?
Communicating with other stakeholders – if so, how?

How do you make decisions about how you respond to the technological environment?

Do you think changes in the technological environment have impacted on your school's marketing/public relations strategy/activites?

If so, how?

As a Headmaster, how important do you think it is to monitor the technological environment?

Do you do this or is there a person within your organisation responsible for this?

If another person does, who is it (title)?

If monitored, how is the technological environment monitored?
Probes:
Networking/conferences?
Media?
Industry briefings/publications?

Do you think the **politica**l environment has impacted on education within your career in education? (Either at a state or federal level?)

If so, what would you identify as being the main catalysts for change or the major political aspects to impact on education within this period?

Do you feel these events have impacted on schools you have run?
If so, how?

How do you make decisions about how you respond to the political environment?

Do you think changes in the political environment have impacted on your school's marketing/public relations strategy/activites?

If so, how?

As a Headmaster, how important do you think it is to monitor the political environment?

Do you do this or is there a person within your organisation responsible for this?

If another person does, who is it (title)?

If monitored, how is the political environment monitored?

How have you responded to these changes in your role as Principal/Headmaster?

Do you think the **economic** environment has impacted on education within your career in education?

If so…

What would you identify as being the main catalysts for change within the economic environment to impact on education within this period?

Do you feel these events have impacted on schools you have run?

If so, how?

How have you responded to such events?

Why?

How do you make decisions about how you respond to the economic environment?

Do you think changes in the economic environment have impacted on your school's marketing/public relations strategy activities?

If so, how?

As a Headmaster, how important do you think it is to monitor the economic environment?

Do you do this or is there a person within your organisation responsible for this?

If another person does, who is it (title)?

Is there anything we haven't covered that you think is relevant to my inquiries into strategies schools have adopted in response to increased competition?

Thank you so much for your time. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me on 0403 150 812 or e.macpherson@qut.edu.au.

Information Package for Participants

Project title: Strategy and its influence on an organisation's ability to successfully adapt in changing environments.

Elizabeth Macpherson (Masters Student)

School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations, Queensland University of Technology

Email: e.macpherson@qut.edu.au; Phone: 0403 150 812.

Description of the research

The purpose of this research is to investigate headmasters'/principals' interpretation of the education sector and the environment it operates within during the past 25 years (1980 – 2005) and how they have made decisions about how to respond to any changes that may have occurred during this time.

About the researcher

Elizabeth Macpherson is conducting this research through the School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations at Queensland University of Technology (QUT) as part of her Master of Business (Research). She is also employed as an Associate Lecturer in the School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations at QUT. If you require confirmation of these details please contact the principal supervisor, Dr Judy Drennan on j.drennan@qut.edu.au or associate supervisor, Jennifer Bartlett on j.bartlett@qut.edu.au.

Expected benefits

Your involvement in this project will not directly benefit you. However it is hoped that by increasing understanding of successful strategies that have been adopted by schools to adapt to the increased competition in the educational sector, that schools and their stakeholders will develop greater mutual understanding and that the outcomes of this study will forward management practice.

Risks

There are no expected risks arising from the conduct of this research.

Confidentiality

The data collected is confidential and anonymous and will be used to create understanding of public relations strategies adopted and decision-making processes within schools. Participants in the study will be disguised in the thesis for example, Organisation A, Interviewee 3. Any undisguised information will not be made public. At all times the information will be handled with care and respect.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in the project is entirely voluntary. At any time you can choose to withdraw from the project with no penalty, and you can choose to discontinue participation at any time without comment or penalty.

Questions / further information

If you have further questions or would like more information about this project, you are welcome to contact me by phone on 0403 150 812 or by email at e.macpherson@qut.edu.au or the principal supervisor of the project, Dr Judy Drennan at j.drennan@qut.edu.au

Concerns / complaints

If any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project arise, you should contact the Research Ethics Officer at Queensland University of Technology on 3138 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au

Feedback

At the conclusion of this project, you will receive a summary of my conclusions and recommendations.

Could I please tape our interview as it would greatly assist me in the data analysis? If you agree, you are free to press pause at any time during the interview. Thank you!

Project title: Strategy and its influence on an organisation's ability to successfully adapt in changing environments.

Researcher:

Elizabeth Macpherson (Masters Student)

School of Advertising, Marketing and Public Relations, Queensland University of Technology

Email: e.macpherson@qut.edu.au; Phone: 0403 150 812.

Statement of consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

- have read and understood the information sheet about this project;
- have had any questions answered to your satisfaction;
- are happy to have this interview audio-taped and transcribed;
- understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team;
- understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
- understand that you can contact the research team if you have any questions about the project, or the Research Ethics Officer on 3183 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if they have concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and
- agree to participate in the project.

Name _____

Signature _____

Date _____ / _____ / _____

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