LEADERSHIP IN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION, 1988-1991:

On the Experience of Coping with Crises

By: Barbara Joan Cargill
Student No 196821871

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for subject 497602 Research in Higher Education in the Degree of Master of Education.

ABSTRACT

Following the White Paper of 1988, institutions of higher education in Australia embarked on a period of intensive amalgamation activity which occupied much of the ensuing two-to-three years. During this period, many Colleges of Advanced Education were under intense pressure to merge with other institutions, placing the Directors in the position of leadership at a time of such change and stress that it could readily be seen as crisis.

This study explores the experiences of three such Directors, viewed from 1991 when each could reflect upon the preceding two-three years and the nature of their leadership role in coping with the crisis.

Their experiences and reflections gathered via interviews, are compared with what is known about leadership in crisis situations from the literature, and then examined for themes or recurring clustered responses.

Whilst much of the leaders' experience reflects the anticipated roles, actions and feelings described in the literature, the prominent clustering of political roles and skills in this study is less usual. Three key territories of leadership activity are identified as well as several leadership capacities in order to function well in those territories.
STATEMENT

This thesis, forming part of the requirements of the Degree of Master of Education, contains no material that has been submitted for examination for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other university, and comprises only the original work of the author except where due acknowledgment is made in the text.

It is approximately 22,200 words in length.

Barbara J Cargill
January 1994
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In undertaking this study, I was generously given co-operation and quality time by three Directors of Colleges of Advanced Education at various locations.

Each gave me thoughtful answers and a great deal of themselves personally. Without that, there would have been no study. My sincere thanks to each of them, the fictionalised Professors Green, Black and Russett who cannot be more personally named here.

I sincerely thank my Supervisor, Dr Wendy Cahill, who remained totally supportive and encouraging even when my own resolve flagged and reached standstill. She never voiced doubts about my ability to complete the work, even if she thought them!

I also thank Margaret Morison for her willing and supportive efforts with word processing. Without that assistance, given when I was under much pressure, I suspect this work would never have reached paper.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Introduction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>The Context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Questions of interest in this study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>The Nature of 'Organisational Crisis'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>The Related Literature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>The Causes of Crises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Crises in Educational Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>Traditional Theoretical Views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>Transformation and Culture - more change, more crisis and more clues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Paradoxes &amp; Reversals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Results - What the Leaders said of their experiences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Categorisation of data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Clusters and Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>The Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Cluster 1: The contextual information and events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Cluster 2: Vision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Cluster 3: Political aspects - the macro/external</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Cluster 4: Political representational aspects - micro/internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Cluster 5: Action Detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>Cluster 6: Self-characterisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>Cluster 7: Reflections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Chapter 5 Discussion

Adding to our Understanding of Leadership in Crisis Situations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>The Higher Education Context</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Qualities and Capacities of the Leaders</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Leaders and Followers</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Leaders as Learners</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Vision and Strategy</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Power, Politics and Authority</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter 6 Conclusions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>The Importance of Vision</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>The Cultural Dimension</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>The Psychological-Emotional Domain</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Key Personal Capacities for Crisis</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>An Integrated Approach</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Bibliography

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Appendix A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Context

There is little doubt that the field of higher education in Australia has experienced very turbulent times in recent years.

From 1988, students found themselves paying a fee for their courses, or accumulating a debt to settle later on. Academic and general staff found themselves dealing with award restructuring and protracted pay case negotiations which substantially reshaped certain elements of career paths. The 1988 White Paper steered course designers rather more into considering the 'human capital' implications of their offerings, and in what ways their courses might genuinely add to Australia's needed labour market skills and capacity. Whole institutions found themselves almost overnight becoming 'something else', or all but disappearing as the pressure to amalgamate increased. Funding to higher education has become increasingly, and often critically tight. Most universities and colleges have found themselves struggling to make ends meet, and to provide even for basics. Yet the demand for higher education seems to increase almost insatiably.

In such pervasive turbulence, it is hardly surprising that chief executives, like all other players, have found themselves having to cope with rapid, confronting and dramatic change. Vice Chancellors and Directors are all people of considerable positional power and with high levels of formal leadership responsibility. (Middlehurst, 1993:72). Despite this, there is a
sense in which they became, to some extent, 'bit-part' players in a much larger drama, especially in the 1988-1991 period, the period which this present study selects as one of particularly turbulent change.

This study focuses on some of those leaders, looking particularly at the leadership role and leadership experience in some of the smaller institutions of higher education around the country, viewed from the perspective of mid-1991. These smaller institutions had especially faced the substantial challenge of redefining their organisational future. Could they continue to stand alone as viable, recognised institutions? Could their future place in the Unified National System, and in the 'funding race' of higher education only be assured via some process of amalgamation or merger?

Whilst all higher education institutions in Australia, even the largest and most inherently stable and strong had felt buffeted by the winds of change, it is the smaller, more vulnerable ones which faced the deepest 'crises of future' from 1988 to 1991.

Leaders in those places could be expected to have had a rather more ambiguous, uncertain road to travel throughout that period. They undoubtedly coped with more anxious and insecure staff groups, more unanswered and unanswerable questions about their institutions' basic survival, and more intense political and economic pressure from government circles to reorganise their affairs and make critical decisions about future directions.
1.2 Questions of interest in this study
What, then, did some of these leaders in higher education's more vulnerable institutions actually experience? What does it mean to lead when besieged by crisis after crisis? How can one lead when there is a disturbing sense that eventual decisions may be made elsewhere with or without consultation - and that the leadership process can be abruptly truncated by outside forces declaring a predetermined future (or non-future!) for the institution? How does one lead when uncertainties are so wide-ranging as to render the formulation of clear vision all but impossible at times? What qualities and skills will be required of the leader in such crisis times?

These questions, and others, were raised with three of the most affected leaders in higher education. Invited to reflect on the quality and nature of their own experiences in the 1988-1991 period, they described and explored some dimensions of leadership with particular reference to what they perceived and recalled as critical incidents. Their accounts contribute towards an emerging picture of educational leadership in crisis times.

1.3 The Nature of 'Organisational Crisis'
When is an organisation in a crisis, and not merely a change phase or temporary turbulence? Is 'crisis' a more urgent, more dramatic stage of change, and around which issues or events might such a set of circumstances emanate? Bass (1988:329) describes organisational crisis as:
'the product of organizational decay, internal dissension and power struggles, or intense and threatening market competition'

all of which may endanger the SURVIVAL of the organisation. The crisis may be acute or chronic, or arising from periods of protracted or chaotic uncertainty, or where sudden or dramatic change reveals problems with planning, finances and cultural cohesion. Organisational crises may also arise out of industrial accidents, natural disasters or international political hostilities - but whatever the origin, the scenario rates as 'crisis' where organisational survival and well-being are at stake.

Typically, crises generally involve the interruption of plans, structures and/or actions which are underway, and this interruption will also produce stress and emotion (Weick, 1990). It therefore seems somewhat self-evident that smaller higher education institutions in Australia were, by any definition, in crisis-prone territory, rather than simple change states during the period of this study. This was not an entirely new condition for the higher education sector in Australia, post-1988.

There have been previous institutional amalgamation cycles, such as the 1981 'Razor Gang' cost-cutting exercise which saw the merging of many smaller institutions with larger ones around the country. That round of amalgamations undoubtedly produced some crises of its own for some colleges. But the post-1988 amalgamations were more than simple cost-cutting activities, and different from previous rounds in that they were:
(a) Significantly more ambiguous with fewer direct clear merger instructions or directives, and

(b) Resulted in a Unified National System which substantially altered the identity of some institutions, especially smaller partners out of the Colleges of Advanced Education tradition.

What is clear is that many or most participants in higher education in Australia believed that some unique level of crisis was being experienced from 1988 to 1991, and that it was largely emanating from the external politico-economic environment. Students, academics, staff associations, commentators, employers and chief executives connected with the system seem to widely agree in this perception. (Harmon & Meek, 1988(a))

Notably, all three of the Directors who participated in this study intuitively understood that, for them and their institutions, 'crisis' had indeed been resident for all or part of the three year period in question. They also understood that the crises had in some fundamental sense been about institutional survival.
2. THE RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 The Causes of Crises

Considering how intuitively understood the notion of organisational crisis appears to be, there is a marked paucity of literature which specifically addresses these phenomena.

We do learn that crises rarely have a single, obvious cause, since in complex, enmeshed environments, it is far more likely that an organisational crisis in fact arises in multi-causal fashion as described by Morgan (1986) in his chapter on Transformation and Flux. Multi-causal scenarios may have partly originated outside the organisation in the environment, partly inside it, partly because of the leader's own behaviours and actions, and partly because of the dynamic interaction of all of these elements. This dynamism of cause seems most descriptive of the cases examined for this present study.

Bennis and Nanus (1985 in Beare et al 1988:107-8) note that organisational crises are, however, frequently crises of leadership. Leaders have either failed to develop or communicate vision of meaning, or to share power, or to develop shared values. This creates something of a paradoxical situation where managers and leaders struggle to deal with the crisis situations which are partly of their own making.
2.2 Crises in Educational Organisations

In educational organisations in Australia and elsewhere throughout the 80s and early 90s, crises have been very much multi-causal in nature, and more about fundamental survival than about excellence, in many cases. Many writers have noted the extreme turbulence and organisational chaos in schools and universities and educational systems over this decade or so, all over the world (Starratt, 1990:1; Vaill, 1989; Deal, 1990:131, 137). The educational world at all levels is in a state of flux. There is a widely acknowledged loss of old values, traditional heroes and heroines and symbols, and many cultural certainties are now gone.

Institutions from the College of Advanced Education tradition here in Australia were in some of this turbulence before mid-1988, and the additional government-prompted change since the Green and White Papers had most definitely led to some losses of old values and cultures. Proud of their distinctive histories as teaching institutions and providers of quality applied knowledge, the two to three year period of this study had necessarily brought a number of major cultural shifts to some institutions. Such re-orientations of culture and strategy are virtually bound to be experienced with some sense of crisis at some points.

There is a sense in which the very nature of educational organisations predisposes them to experiencing crises. As far back as the 1970s, Weick (in Sergiovanni and Corbally, 1984:4) has referred to loosely coupled systems in education, and Cohen
and March (1974:3) were describing organisational anarchies in education. It has long been recognised that the problems of developing shared goals, the familiar yet unclear technology and the fluid participation patterns of universities and schools and unclear authority lines render them crisis-prone, more so than many other organisations and systems.

Green (1988) also noted these tendencies in universities, and the real limitations on leadership within such contexts. Culturally, too, universities are more collegial than many other organisations and this tradition of the 'community of scholars' may tend to turn leaders into servants of the group rather than masters of it, a significant issue when critical events occur. (Middlehurst, 1993:49).

It therefore seems likely that the Government's UNS policy initiatives of 1988 were directed at a collection of organisations particularly ill-suited by their very fabric and nature, to the processes of change in strategy and culture which were intended and required. Some other public organisations and systems might have coped better with the chaos.

Certainly in Victoria, and to some extent in other States, and federally, political and economic events of the late 80s had created large scale public-purse crises which have subsequently cascaded speedily into educational organisations as budgets get tighter and some governments less secure. Some crisis is shifted from the macro-environment into the micro-environment.
which is, as we have seen, by its very nature ill-equipped to deal with it.

Fullan (1988:14) notes that in schools, principals who are already overloaded and often narrow in experience, when pressed to create stability in this chaos can only respond by 'playing it safe'. They try to avoid or reduce crises and ironically may well cause more. Whether Directors and Vice-Chancellors of Higher Education Institutions respond in this way to crises is not yet known, but this same conservatism and narrowness of experience with management and leadership roles in general has often been attributed to them.

Crisis is therefore a particular kind of change which requires special management form and skills. Leadership is prime amongst them, and yet the vast literature on leadership over recent decades gives few clues. So few mentions are made of crises *per se*, that one is tempted to conclude that there were simply fewer organisational crises with which leaders needed to contend, or that crisis and change in general were no different from any other time in the old Taylorist 'one best way' approaches (Booth, 1993:12).

2.3 Traditional Theoretical Views

Stoghill (in Beare et al 1988:103) says that the traditional trait approach to leadership thinking and research indicates that effective leaders generally have among their traits, a capacity to handle stress, and some persistence and stamina. In his discussion on the military model of leadership (also relevant for
emergency services) Mant (1983:144-7) notes that the personality of a successful military leader in wartime is quite different from that of a peace-time leader, to the extent that wartime leaders often fail dismally in peace and vice versa. The psychological make-up which makes for competence in the crisis (e.g., aggression, authority and control) will probably render the individual incompetent or unacceptable in the non-crisis period.

Sadler more recently asserts that we need people who are radicals rather than incrementalists (1988:162) for strong transformational change, and Janis reminds us that some personalities will actually help create crises because of a temporary or chronic personality deficiency or lack of key skills. The manipulative, neurotic, closed, inturned, socially disagreeable personality in leaders is likely to cause crisis (Janis, 1989:204-8) quite possibly for self-serving ends. Of course, the psychopathic or sociopathic personality anywhere within the organisation is capable of creating leadership or industrial crisis and organisations generally deal with this evil within rather poorly. (Mitroff & Kilmann, 1984).

We have other snippets of insight from others on what makes up the leadership personality or character for highly turbulent modern times. Kotter (1990:107) says such a person will require intelligence, drive, mental health and integrity at a minimum. Warren (in Kimberley, 1984) adds courage, energy and optimism. Mintzberg (in Moses & Roe, 1990:229) describes a wide range of competencies required for leaders in the higher education context, particularly:
. peer skills, i.e., interpersonal relationship;
. leadership skills of motivating, training, coaching, assisting, etc;
. information processing;
. decision making in ambiguous circumstances;
. resource allocation skills;
. entrepreneurial skills;
. introspection - observing one's own, as well as other's behaviour.

and Bennis (1989) adds a ninth to this list:

. capacity to know and articulate the hopes and dreams of institutional staff almost before they do themselves.

Consistent with these competencies, Booth cites Kanter who suggested

"...that management will need to develop a more cross-functional or interdepartmental approach. This is particularly true of those involved in crisis management. They will often be part of the strategic planning team and need to be able to relate to a multidisciplinary group of people. They have to be able to help create from such teams, which may represent intrinsic conflict, effective working groups. This calls for skills of negotiation and diplomacy which are characteristic of change agents!" (in Booth, 1993:285).

Clearly, the interpersonal team building and political aspects cannot be avoided.

Moses and Roe (1990) also note that some of these abilities are personal qualities and some are more skill oriented, dependent in part on training and preparation for the roles of leadership in
higher education. They note too, that such preparation is virtually never done systematically within each institute of higher education, and that Heads of Department, Chairs and CEOs/Directors/Vice Chancellors invariably have had to develop themselves very much under their own steam and usually elsewhere, i.e., not within their college or university of their own leadership position.

Could some of these qualities and capacities ever be developed through training? Humility is a quality mentioned as vital by several (Baldrige & Deal, 1983) (Bennis, 1989:117), (Cohen & March 1974), (Greenfield 1980). This capacity to realise that one's impact is only small in the scheme of things, that status has to be traded for substance, and self importance must be foregone, is highly likely not to be amenable to any conventional training. Neither are the needed qualities of openness, creativity, integrity, dedication and magnanimity (Bennis, 1989:117). Indeed they appear to be what Adams & Spencer (1986:9-12) describe as a state of consciousness, not a mere collection of personality traits and skills.

It is this more spiritual and wholistic view of leadership which has partially replaced the trait-based approach. Ritscher, (1986:62) writes of spiritual leadership, a theme much developed by Vaill (1989) where he sees leaders in highly turbulent 'white water' situations as needing to pay more attention to their own spiritual qualities, feelings, insights and yearnings, to tune in to the deepest principles and truths one knows. In so doing, Vaill believes leaders become their values, and they are the self-
actualised people Bennis (1989) sees as suitable. Leaders in this sense are those who 'love the people and hate the system'. (Vaill, 1989:142). They are warm, friendly, genuinely respectful of all the people working with them. (Bass, 1990). They are also not interested in a spirituality of 'cheap thrills', but in developing the values and visions which genuinely 'inspirate' others. Vaill unabashedly proclaims that leaders and organisations in general, frankly need more love. (Vaill 1989:142).

The acute need for leadership in our modern, crisis-prone organisations has, in many ways produced an over-emphasis on the personality or character of the ideal leader. (If we could only find him or her more often!). We could as productively focus on followership, and recognise that leadership is a quality of a whole system, a dynamic created by both leaders and followers and the context within which the actions occur. (Krantz, 1990). This unhooks us from the deep dependency on leaders per se and the hope (fantasy?) that some outstanding individual will save an institution from adversity. It also points to the need to look at whole organisational scenarios and contexts in a situational way, making traits of little consequence on their own. (Watkins, 1989:12; Krantz, 1990).

There is thus very little clear picture of the traits of ideal leadership for crisis in higher education or elsewhere and the rather perverse reality is that such a leader might very possibly be unsuitable for the institution - both before and after such a turbulent time.
Older behavioural models of the '60s, typified by Blake & Mouton (in Grady, 1989:137) which use the two critical dimensions of concern for task/structure and concern for people/consideration are simplistically clear. If a '9.9' leader (as measured by Blake & Mouton's Grid) is best for all occasions then that includes crises. Apparently crisis times for organisations are like every other time, from a leadership point of view.

Later contingency approaches certainly differentiate more. Hersey & Blanchard's situational leadership approach (in Beare et al, 1988:104) indicates that crises would require Quadrant I style, with high task and low relationship behaviour from leaders. Where the task is new or unclear, staff anxious or uncertain, and/or some urgent efforts are required to get a work group performing, the Quadrant I style, typified by 'Telling' is appropriate.

According to Hersey & Blanchard, any other style at that stage would produce more problem than relief. Yet we know that higher education institutions with unclear authority lines and long histories of collegially based decision making processes (in part) are unlikely organisations for a heavy handed 'Telling' approach to leadership, during crises or at any other time.

Fiedler's contingency theory of the 70s and 80s also has some room to consider crisis leadership. According to Adams & Yoder (1985:21) where leader-member relations in an organisation are poor (as they may well be in a crisis situation) and the task
structure unclear (as it is likely to be in a crisis) and the leader's position power weak (as it almost always is in educational organisations) THEN the 'best-fit' leader will be one with a low LPC (least preferred co-worker) score i.e., a more task-oriented person. Where the leader-member relations are good, task structure again unclear and position power weak, THEN a high LPC leader style would be best.

Fiedler's complex set of contingency variables does not, however, move beyond the organisational status quo, especially in terms of power. (Watkins, 1989:20), and where the crisis may well be about distribution of power within the organisation, then this approach will do nothing to change it or address it, merely altering the steps in a dance which goes on to the same music. The same criticism could be levelled at all situational or contingency leadership approaches. Again, it is assumed that leadership is distinct from followship. Issues of group dependence on individuals are not explored and the focus is on key people rather than whole group dynamics. Leadership is therefore still resident in a person's personality or behaviour rather than seen as a group phenomena and function which may be widely shared, mobile and generated and sustained by all in far-reaching unconscious and conscious, structured and unstructured ways. These contingency/situational theories also fail to isolate 'leadership' from 'Headship', that is, leadership as process from leadership as position. (Middlehurst, 1993:26).

However, one of the major insights of the situational ways of thinking is that some attention is given to matters of group
maturity and development. Hersey & Blanchard drew attention to critical stages of development and the predictable leadership dilemmas which would emerge in this progression and later writers developed this understanding much further. It is now known that the complexities of group dynamics, the paradoxes of stuckness and movement within groups in organisations mean that leaders need to be able to manage these crises of internal process (Smith & Berg, 1987).

However, it is really only when we move on from these fairly traditional mechanistic views of leadership and organisations to the more modern understanding of leadership as a cultural and political phenomenon, that we begin to seriously address the matters more related to modern organisational crises. Whilst we continue to see organisations simplistically as machines, then leaders will be cast as 'fixers and repairers', operating on others. When we accept that organisations are complex human systems, then leaders have a different role to play, whatever the circumstances (Watkins, 1989:29; Morgan, 1986).

2.4 Transformation and Culture - more change, more crisis and more clues

Beginning in the mid 80s, a whole wave of literature on transformational (rather than transactional) and cultural leadership emerged. Schein (1985) clarified that one of the five ways leaders embed and transmit culture is via their ways of dealing with critical incidents, and so crises featured slightly more than in earlier years.
Many old myths were laid to rest. Bennis and Nanus (1985:221-226) made it clear that leadership most certainly does not all exist at the top of organisations and that it should not for the organisation to develop a deep capacity to handle change. The extent of what others call 'deep coping' (compared with 'shallow coping') with organisational problems and crises is evidence of the leader's prior record with staff development, and with genuinely empowering others. This depth is essential in crises, but it is too late to begin developing and empowering staff at the time of crisis if it is not already a leadership strategy.

Leaders also emerge as having a strong role to play in setting standards. Ethical and moral behaviour should be modelled, and it remains important 'to act predictably in times of crisis'. (Bennis and Nanus, 1985, in Grady, 1989:45). Leaders' actions also carry a message as to whether change is to be taken seriously. (Fullan, 1983) and this constructing of others' reality is especially important in deciding whether others will experience the change as a crisis or not.

One of the major facets of example-setting for leaders is in relation to learning. Joiner states:

'They (organisations) need to learn how to learn, to develop a capacity for organisational learning. The great challenge for leaders is to develop learning organisations'.

(Joiner, 1986:42)

Senge (1990) strongly endorses this view, and others echo the theme. Bennis and Nanus speak of the learning capacity of
leaders who need to be willing and proficient learners themselves (1985:188; Fullan, 1988:44). Schon points out that in times of constant change and turbulence, leaders need to be masters of 'reflection-in-action'. To the extent that they develop the capacity to reflect, to introspect, and learn from their own mistakes, they also stand a chance of being able to become agents of organisational learning who encourage others to learn similarly (Schon, 1984:42). This is vital where a pattern of corporate crisis is apparent, created by repeated errors of strategy or suchlike, and it is in danger of becoming a 'blindspot', an organisational 'undiscussable'. (Schon, 1984:57-8).

Indeed, the transformation of organisations into effective, adaptive entities is often about overcoming deficiencies in either strategy or culture, which have risen (sunk!) to crisis proportions. Most organisations and the leaders of them are poor at either developing strategy, or at developing culture, i.e., low in one or the other. Where leaders are weak at both aspects, their organisation is almost certain to move to crisis and probable failure (Hickman & Silva, 1985:28). 'Failure' frequently results in takeover or merger, and these usually become clashes and crises of culture, which need to be managed accordingly (Smith & Peterson, 1988:167).

It is also worth noting that transformational approaches will experience difficulties in universities for three reasons:
The notion of corporateness is often problematic;
Charisma is likely to be seen as 'hype' and encounter scepticism among academics; and
High risk strategies adopted by publicly-payrolled organisations are unlikely to be eagerly welcomed by taxpayers or their representatives, producing a conservatism of strategy.

(Middlehurst, 1993:85)

What is abundantly clear, is that prevention of crises of strategy or culture is better than cure after-the event. (Register, 1987:Ch.7) and that prevention of crises has a lot to do with the 'deep coping' already described. It is important that leaders can be confident that all will be well even when they are not personally there, that others also have the power, skill and competence to avert crises.

Hickman & Silva outline three 'deadly' attitudes which will exacerbate a potential crisis situation, and very likely turn it into a full-blown crisis:

- a short term orientation;
- shallow thinking, and
- quick-fix expectations.

Fullan agrees by urging leaders, when faced with overwhelming, 'impossible' or potentially disastrous tasks, to 'think big, but start small' (1988:26).

Part of the 'thinking big' requires leaders to take a longer term look at issues such as organisational structure. Since most
organisations are in very turbulent environments, and a crisis may well emerge because of this turbulence, then obviously structures must be reviewed and transformed to meet that turbulence. Tichy & Devanna (1986:211-216) remind us that more organic structures are highly likely to be better for such times and may actually result in a longer term capacity to avoid crises of rigidity.

Managing the cultural transitions which frequently accompany critical organisational periods of merger, takeover or failure, is one of the leader's key responsibilities. Deal notes that 'change produces loss and loss creates grief' (1990:135), and this grief needs facilitating or we risk having emotional baggage making later crises further to the present transitional one. Bridges (1988) also stresses the need for helping people let go of the old, pass through the 'neutral zone' and make new beginnings. This management of transition means dealing with loss, despair and disorientation in the first stages. It then means providing a great deal of interim structure and meaning for people as they move through the confusion of the 'wilderness' between old and new, and it certainly means consulting widely, rebuilding a shared vision, and reskilling to complete the transformation of the organisation to its new form. Human crises can either be contained by leaders through these stages, or can be allowed to become chaos, collective depression and disaster.

Even with high quality leadership, amalgamations of institutions of higher education (or threatened amalgamations) will, and historically always have produced high levels of
anxiety. Where they have been voluntarily sought, then the crisis is less: where forced, anxiety is almost inevitable. (Harman & Meek, 1988:119). CEOs in higher education can exercise considerable skill and yet still not fully manage to contain this anxiety - and the organisational politics and conflicts of any average institution of higher education will also decide the outcomes quite apart from the actions of the leadership per se.

It is this sense of opportunity in crisis which Bolman & Deal (1984:294-8) see as vital for leaders meeting complex new challenges. Faced with the likelihood of more and more challenges and complexity, leaders need to be wary of the pitfalls of inflexibility. When faced with crisis, leaders may be inclined to 'do more of the same' only harder or faster. The flipside of this inflexibility is a trap of over-responsive ness, where managers and leaders become prone to 'knee-jerk' anarchy. Having tried some of the usual strategies which don't work, some are inclined to panic, give up all control of the process, and let everyone please themselves. Bolman and Deal stress the need for leaders to see opportunities in crises, opportunities for learning, for new strategies, etc. The keys are in having a firm set of core beliefs, coupled with flexible thinking and elastic strategies (1984:298; Vaill, 1989).

The wide array of skills and capacities required of a leader in these crisis scenarios is a little daunting. It is not difficult to see why times of crisis often cause the emergence of a charismatic leader figure, whether that crisis is acute or chronic.
It has long been noted that people with such inspirational gifts of exceptional insight, courage, energy, decisiveness, etc are likely to emerge from uncertainty and distress (Kets de Vries, 1989; Bass, 1988:55-56), but it is not an essential part of crisis (Bennis & Nanus, 1985:223).

More worrying is the observation that would-be charismatic leaders may take advantage of existing crisis situations, or worse, in times of stability, create a crisis (Bass, 1988:314). This could occur in older organisations which are failing or new organisations struggling to get established and survive. Where organisational cultures are in transition, there are opportunities for the charismatic leader to create new cultures, create new meanings and beliefs for supporters.

Tichy & Devanna add that transformational leaders frequently need to create a sense of urgency to mobilise others, not for any self-serving or ego-enhancing ends, but because organisations which are still healthy are often resistant to change (1986:5). The leader may judge that change is necessary before the problem, however small, becomes a full emergency (1986:47) and a form of crisis is created to produce that sense of urgency.

2.5 Paradoxes and Reversals
What becomes clearer in more recent literature, is that organisational crises may actually require leaders to do precisely what earlier models suggested they should not.
Owens speaks of 'leadership by indirection'. We are accustomed to thinking of crises requiring that some command, direction and authority be used to further change processes. This is the classic military emergency model. Yet we now largely accept that change is only complete when the human spirit changes, and this happens in response to the more mythical, symbolic and cultural elements of leadership (Owens, 1986:122). Humans are unlikely to ever change fully by edict.

And, somewhat perversely, the widespread modern view that leadership is largely about sharing power, empowering others and developing leadership depth in organisations - all of which has been widely accepted in education circles - may actually have to be reversed in crisis times. Since shared leadership roles require extensive and detailed negotiation and understanding so as to avoid conflict, when crises loom, there may be insufficient time or trust for roles to be so clarified. (Holly & Southworth, 1989:56-63). In these circumstances, more focussed leadership may be temporarily preferable.

However, more focussed is not the same as the 'Lone Ranger', heroic leadership style which Madeleine Green (1988) describes and asserts as ill-suited to the modern era in higher education generally, and especially where very rapid turbulent change is occurring. She argues that the real limitations on Chief Executive decision-making in universities means that leadership simply must be widely developed within the institution, creating a deep pool of talented people who can think and act strategically as a focussed body when circumstances require it.
Her leadership model for the '90s in higher education lists nine core tasks in all, five of which she sees as very important in the present post managerial era. They are:

(i) Symbolic leader
(ii) Coalition builder
(iii) Team Leader
(iv) Knowledge executive
(v) Future agent.

(Green, 1988: 37-38)

These five roles strongly echo the thoughts of Bennis, Kanter and others noted in earlier pages.

We might also need to recognise that leadership in higher education in Australia has been overwhelmingly practised by men. We do not know whether women in leadership roles might have handled the crisis situations any better, or differently. There are far too few examples to examine. It is clear that the strictly instrumental view of leadership as hard-driving, competitive and unemotional (stereotype masculine qualities) is quite inadequate, and that crisis most certainly also requires a balancing with the expressive capacities of sensitivity, gentleness and compassion - the more traditional feminine aspects and much more genuinely consensual and collective in decision making. (Hoferek, 1986:7). The 'maleness' of our higher education leaders could also have limited their capacity for sharing leadership, genuine consultation and emotional
stewardship. The key is therefore partly in actively encouraging more women into higher education leadership, but also in encouraging the development of the 'femininity' in a whole and balanced way within the men who head our institutions.

We, again, may need to shift our thinking from individual people and personalities and begin to think more about functions and dimensions in an wholistic way. It is unwise to think purely in terms of men and women as genders, numbers and roles but about broader qualities of masculinity and femininity, resident in both men and women.

Likewise, we are increasingly pointed toward an understanding of leadership in difficult organisational times as being also about followership and group dynamics. This psycho-social view sees any leader's action as the simultaneous outcome of both that individual's inner needs and the press of outer forces, some conscious negotiations and outworkings some much more unconscious. (Gronn, 1986:5). To look only at leaders may turn the spotlight in the wrong direction; and this is a sobering reminder when one commences a study which takes leaders in Australian higher education as its subjects.

We are left needing to know more. Whilst the literature generally treats crisis only as a subset of change, we may be missing more important points. So many organisations, educational and other, feel themselves to be well beyond the ordinary parameters of change at present, and well into a sense of crisis on certain issues and at certain times.
The only literature directly related to organisational crises tends to focus on natural disasters, chemical leaks, (e.g., Bhopal), oil spills, nuclear meltdowns and the like. We are left teasing out the implications for crisis leadership from more mainstream change and management literature. We are finding that we already know quite a bit in snippets, but we urgently need further consolidation and research in this field.
3. METHODOLOGY

This study sets out to explore the experience of some higher education institutional leaders tracking the 2-3 years from mid 1988 to 1991, the period following the Green and then White Papers on higher education in Australia.

In selecting leaders to join the study, it was decided to focus particularly on those leaders of small to medium sized institutions, those of the CAE tradition which were not in any sense assured of their independent future status and were facing strong pressure to merge/amalgamate with other institutions. The assumption was made that Vice Chancellors of larger and established universities, whilst certainly not having a trouble-free period of leadership, would not have had to address the fundamental issue of institutional sovereignty, of 'survival' as an independent entity.

The Directors of the smaller institutions were apparently in a far more uncertain position, and with significantly more uncertain futures to manage and create for their staff.

What had they experienced during this era of their leadership? Did they feel their organisation to be in crisis? What did they do according to their own recollections? With what effect? What was their own story of the period, how did they attempt to lead at each significant turning point? And what personal skills and attributes best-equipped them to do so?
This study did not attempt to establish what the various Directors actually did in any kind of cross-validating empirical way. Neither did it endeavour to fully evaluate the effectiveness of those leadership performances from others' perspectives. Such enquiries would require extensive data-gathering from a broad range of sources within and without these institutions, well beyond the role of this research undertaking. Instead this study asked three Directors to recall, reflect upon and analyse their own experiences in an attempt to establish whether they, individually or collectively, acted or behaved in the crises in a manner which would appear to be consistent with descriptions from the literature of effective leadership in crisis situations.

This therefore constitutes an interpretivist approach, where the phenomenological world of the subjects is explored as they perceive, experience and understand it. In searching for 'the native's point of view' (Van Maanen 1983:27), we are not primarily interested in how leaders really did behave, but rather, how it was for them - or how they recall it as being. Fetterman (1989:50) warns that in reflecting on events and feelings up to two years prior to the time of interview, we are inescapably up against the limitations of human memory. Some things will have been quite accidentally omitted or forgotten; others will be more selectively 'forgotten' in a process which could, at worst amount to a rewriting of history, through the subjects biases and defences.

But since this study is primarily interested in the 'inner life' of its subjects, an ethnomethodological approach is appropriate, and the
biases of the subjects can be understood simply as part of their 'inner life'. (Benson & Hughes, 1983:61)

This researcher's approach is also inevitably prejudiced and biased. Whilst making every effort to approach subjects with an open mind, in order to enter their world, it would never be possible to do so fully objectively, particularly since the researcher is also a participant in the higher education industry, and inevitably carries some prior opinions and impressions. Selectivity of hearing is not confined to experimental subjects! (Fetterman, 1989:11 and Smith & Berg, 1985:13). It has even been suggested that the phenomena of leadership is an especially difficult subject to research objectively since it is highly prone to perceptual 'contamination' by the researcher's perceptual frameworks.

(Middlehurst, 1993:7)

Several aspects of this study attempted to both contain and adjust for such biases.

Unlike traditional positivistic approaches this more naturalistic methodology (Guba, 1985:80-84) did not attempt to either control variables or to predict outcomes nor to develop clear hypotheses in advance of the data gathering. Data was firstly gathered and then later analysed for 'patterns, key events, themes and connections' (Fetterman, 1989:130). Hypotheses were generated after the data had been gathered in an inductive fashion (Kidder & Judd, 1986:170), or more accurately in an abductive way, as Barry Turner (1990) describes it. He notes the need to move back and forwards between data and analysis and hypotheses in a complex reiterative process, quite unlike the linear logic of deductive methodologies. The 'grounded theory'
approach (Turner, 1990; Lincoln, 1985:141) results in tentative, limited conclusions, but does not begin a study with particular researcher-biased hypotheses in focus.

Additionally, when both data gathering and preliminary analysis were complete, the data were referred back to source subjects for correction and verification, for clearance on confidentiality issues and for purposes of safeguarding against excessive investigator bias. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:108-9).

Within the data gathering contacts themselves, the researcher also took particular care to avoid asking leading questions, minimising the intrusion of bias, but not, of course totally removing it.

Confidentiality and ethical issues were sizeable in this study. Prominent leaders of higher education institutions were unlikely to reveal much of their personal experience if, in doing so, they had also exposed others, or rendered themselves very vulnerable to criticism or attack.

For these reasons, four initial letters of invitation to join this sample were sent out, explaining the purposes, and the procedure, assuring all potential subjects of confidentiality and exploring, that all data would be written in a 'fictional' way. Personalities and institutions were to be given pseudonyms throughout and some identifying descriptions reduced so that state of location and particulars would be difficult to pinpoint. With this reassurance, three of the four Directors indicated willingness to participate in the study. The fourth declined to participate remaining unconvinced that his identity would be
sufficiently protected. The later rights of verification and veto also enabled confidentiality to be preserved.

The four were selected partly on a geographic accessibility basis, and partly on the recommendation of one of their number who believed that the others were likely to be co-operative.

Why only four? Lincoln (1985:141) explains that naturalistic enquiry methods particularly those using intensive ethnomethodological approaches can and should quite purposefully draw a sample. Randomness is not required when wishing to understand the quality and nature of individuals' experience. Indeed, a sample of one may have legitimately revealed something of this rich 'inner life', and the eventual sample of three was ample for the purposes of this study. Limited numbers may not enable generalisations, but, using this approach, can enable close and detailed exploration which permits understanding to develop in the inductive or abductive ways previously described (Benson & Hughes, 1983:23).

With three Directors willing to participate, appointments were made to interview each in some depth. A two hour time was allowed and in all cases, fully utilised, with an option to return for further interviews if required. No follow-up appointments were in fact required. Each of the three interviews was tape recorded with full knowledge and consent of the Directors, thus obviating the need for note taking during the discussion.

The interview format was a semi-structured one, using a guide framework of questions (see Appendix A), rather than a fully
structured questionnaire. The researcher is a trained interviewer with some years of experience as a counsellor. This facilitated a semi-structured approach, since it was possible to draw out reactions, feelings and encourage reflection as the interview progressed and both parties became more comfortable. Subjects were particularly asked about their own experience and behaviour, opinions, values and feelings, focusing around critical events, as they recalled them. It is noteworthy that all three participants appeared to respond well to this methodology, two stating specifically that they had both enjoyed the opportunity to reflect on the preceding 2-3 years of turmoil, and, further that the process had generated some insight into self and events which had not previously been present or nearly so clear. To this extent, whilst not specifically planned or intended, the research became something of an interactive, action research experience.

Analysis of the taped interviews was tackled in two steps:

Firstly, the researcher listened to each, taking detailed notes of key points, quotations and noting unusual or recurring themes. This detailed notetaking by-passed the need for full transcriptions (Miles & Huberman, 1984:121).

Secondly, the notes were then examined and using a card system, key words, events, patterns and themes extracted. Similarities and differences were noted over the three subjects' 'stories' for some comparative perspective.
Where patterns had appeared in particular key events, even if only in the one case, some attempt was then made to explain and give meaning to the data.

Undoubtedly, this data analysis has chosen to pay attention to certain facets of the Directors’ leadership experiences in and around amalgamation issues in the '88-91 years and in the process has glossed over certain others. Nonetheless, the material generated from the three participating leaders, all male, turned out to be a rich diet to digest.
4. RESULTS - WHAT THE LEADERS SAID OF THEIR EXPERIENCES

4.1 Categorisation of data

Working from the detailed notes, each of the three lengthy interviews was analysed. Each key word, idea, quote or point of information in the noted responses was placed into a category, loosely labelled, until all notes had been treated. Wherever an idea recurred, it was placed with others in the same category, and where it represented a new idea, or slightly different way of thinking, a new category was created. Using this process, each category taking shape on a card system, some 20 categories emerged.

They are: (in no particular order):

1. Coalition building;
2. Pre-Green/White paper events or rumours;
3. Fortuitous events - helpful;
4. Fortuitous events beyond control - unhelpful;
5. Own work history and background skills and preparation;
6. Negotiating;
7. Vision;
8. Lobbying and politicking - inside the institution;
9. Descriptions of own personality;
10. Critical addresses to/meetings with staff;
11. Political role;
12. Personal values, ideology, philosophy;
13. Team leader role;
14. Symbolic role;
15 Lobbying and politicking - outside institution;
16 Learnings and reflections;
17 Private and personal 'costs' of '88-'91;
18 Recruitment to Director's position - what each brought as vision to the role;
19 What each did and felt in crises/panic situations;
20 Day-to-day working style.

4.2 Clusters and themes

Further examination of the data in each of these categories suggested a good deal of overlap or at least strong relationship between some of the categories, suggesting that further aggregation into clusters or themes may be useful. The following clusters were formed and tentatively labelled for working purposes.

Cluster 1: Contextual information and events
This cluster includes categories 2, 3 and 4.

Cluster 2: Vision
This cluster includes categories 7, 14 and 18.

Cluster 3: Political-macro
This cluster includes categories 1, 6, 11 and 15.

Cluster 4: Political and representational-micro
This cluster includes categories 8 and 10.
Cluster 5: Action detail
This cluster includes categories 13, 19 and 20.

Cluster 6: Self-characterisation
This cluster includes categories 5, 9 and 12.

Cluster 7: Reflections
This cluster includes categories 16 and 17.

The data from the interviews is presented grouped under these thematic clusterings.

4.3 The Participants
The three participants, fictionalised as required to preserve confidentiality, are referred to as:

Professor Green, who is Director of Broadfields College. Broadfields is a medium-sized provincial institution seeking independence, or at least a preferred alliance within their State. Actually, it is under intense pressure to 'surrender' to a large urban university. Half the townspeople support independence, the other half accept the loss of their provincial college's autonomy as inevitable, and possibly even desirable. Professor Green has been at Broadfields for just a few years, recruited from overseas to the Director's position.

Professor Russett, who is Director of Metropolitan College, an older, inner city college of medium size which,
whilst also seeking independent status, is actively considering several amalgamation partners. Each of the potential partners would produce a very different future scenario and profile for the combined institution. Professor Russett had been at Metropolitan for about two years prior to the period of this study.

Professor Black, who is Director of Coalface College, a medium sized institution in a capital city's suburbia. Coalface, itself the product of previous amalgamations, is unwillingly accepting that it will probably have to amalgamate again, but it has some definite views about preferred partners. It appears that key players in the Government and education bureaucracy have very different plans for Coalface, than those it prefers. Professor Black is a seasoned campaigner who has been at Coalface for some years, and has seen it through one previous merger.

4.4 Cluster 1: The contextual information and events
The three Directors each noted that as the White Paper was released setting in train the events of '88-'91, what took place did so in a context, rather than in purist isolation.

Russett had already started some early (pre-White Paper) exploration within Metropolitan as to whether it might seek to be a university in its own right in the near future. Black had put forward a proposal to the relevant State Minister very early in the piece which proposed a merger with a preferred partner,
the outcome of some on-going strategic thinking within Coalface. Green had noted that rumours and loose-talk within his community and elsewhere had already given rise to some panic activity in institutions and that the "cannibalising of smaller institutions had already begun by rumour, not even yet by Canberra directive".

Each of the Directors spoke of fortuitous events, some within, but many beyond their institution which co-incidentally turned out to be extremely helpful as the amalgamation activity went into full swing.

Note: In this chapter, Italics indicate verbatim quotes. Non italicised statements are paraphrased or the author's commentary.

Green: 'We had done some extensive re-organising and internal trimming and modernising in late '87 which then made Broadfields much more able to cope. Actually, crisis time is a good time for internal change, reform and restructure'.

'The outside crisis within higher education generally, actually helped our further internal reform and rebuilding. There was urgency about it'.

'A senior State bureaucrat had spoken at the start of the period to all the Broadfields staff using an overhead projector transparency with data which proved we were the most productive per unit cost in this State. It gave a convincing
picture of a good institution, and the staff were very buoyed up. In front of the meeting, I asked the fellow "why should we give all this up?" and he said publicly "maybe you shouldn't". It was the kind of boost money could not buy and his timing was exquisite.'

The Deans were extremely cohesive after the bureaucrat's visit.

"The university we were being most actively pursued by was seen by our staff as the outside enemy. They pulled together very tightly to resist that enemy in particular'.

Without that clear enemy things might have been different.

'I sat next to the Vice Chancellor of the big city university on the plane and at a Canberra conference. Quite co-incidental really. We got talking and had a sort of mutually respectful association. It helped our later alliance a lot'.

In this case, sheer chance had laid several important pieces of the foundation.

Black: The State Government agency leaked some information about its preferred partner for Coalface, including some 'gossip' about what the partner really thought of Coalface and its Director.

'The leakages revealed that all our early negotiations had been a total charade. They were saying one thing and thinking the
opposite. We stopped their pretence after that. I don’t know who leaked the story, but it changed things for us’.

‘One of the other possible or even probable alliances being worked out elsewhere in this State suddenly fell through, even though it looked a certainty’.

Suddenly Black was ‘IN’ and within a week was able to negotiate a much more favourable amalgamation for Coalface. He recognised that circumstances had suddenly created an opening where there had appeared to be none, and he had quickly taken the opening.

**Russett:** ‘*We quite fortuitously were offered an extra site (by the Government) as a square-off for earlier losses*’.

The government agency assisting with amalgamation arrangements and negotiations had proposed a creative and rigorous package to several institutions to get some solutions. This stroke of creativity was in marked contrast to earlier bullying by other government sources, and had the effect of turning around the attitudes of several institutions.

‘*Without that breakthrough, we would still be negotiating or brawling I think*’.

Of course, there were also events well beyond the control of the Directors or their institutions, and some were decidedly *unhelpful* in the tide of events.
Green recalls seeing another possible regional amalgamation partner close a deal, thus taking it 'off the market' and limiting viable options for Broadfields.

At the same time, Green was also having to deal with an internal problem not of his own making. An unsuccessful applicant for the Director's job, which he now held, was still within Broadfields, and making life difficult for Green. He notes that he had 'a lot of repairing of bridges to do there, so I could get on with handling the external battles'.

**Black:** The Vice-Chancellor of the neighbouring university at which we were initially being pushed was afraid of a large technology-based competition on his doorstep. As the idea to strengthen and expand the technology based alliance became public knowledge, 'The VC got on his bike and rode over as fast as possible. The fear of that kind of competition kick-started him into action, but he and his university turned out to be more arrogant and insecure than could ever have been imagined'.

The Ministerial direction for one university to simultaneously negotiate with all potential parties led to a thirty-two person committee with unions at all meetings and negotiations.

'It produced a cumbersome set-up with high mistrust, anxiety and paranoia. Truly, is was a very unhelpful directive. We could not decide anything like that'.
Coalface was being pressured in a variety of ways to make amalgamation arrangements with its neighbour, mostly because of geographical concerns, but as the university partner revealed itself to be arrogant and difficult in the eyes of Coalface staff, the possible alliance began to produce panic.

'The more that university behaved badly, the more panic set in here, because, at that stage, Coalface had nowhere else to go. We felt we were in bed with a monster! Any push from a Minister or bureaucrat at the stage, produced more panic'.

Russett: Having not made the amalgamation deal which the Department of Employment, Education and Training (D.E.E.T) wanted to see in 1989, Metropolitan had been on the receiving end of some bureaucratic 'bullying'.

'We had our funds sent to another University - the one we were supposed to be in bed with - and had to claw it back. We were being punished and bullied beyond belief, for every little thing Canberra could think of. We lost funds for under enrolling. We lost some large capital funding which had been promised earlier'.

Part of the bullying tactics included pushing Metropolitan at some patently unsuitable partners, where it is doubtful whether an alliance could ever have worked.

'It was supposed to bring us to our knees. It did not help - but it did not work either'.
4.5 **Cluster 2: Vision**

Each of the three Directors had either had some clear view of how their institution should progress right from the time of their recruitment and appointment, or such a clear vision had developed once they were in place. Their visions were not always in keeping with the significant redirections foisted upon them in the 1988-1991 period.

**Green:** Recruited to Broadfields specifically because of his known commitment to undergraduate regional education for a 'mass' population rather than for an elite, Green was also deeply committed to applied learning.

'I was hired with a vision. *This community wanted a regional university*.'

It would need to be small, viable, highly accessible and focussed on undergraduate work. He never missed opportunities, either pre-1988 or during the amalgamation period to put that vision forward, to iterate and re-iterate it.

The more Broadfields came 'under siege' the more Green amplified his figurehead role. His face popped up all the time in local press and media. He intentionally made enormous public relations efforts, helped by Broadfields' Council

'I was chastised by many for going over-the-top, but I carried right on with it, building a media profile. I knew what we stood
for and what I believed, and I had to be the figurehead to carry it'.

Black: 'I was recruited to Coalface specifically to help it bed down a previous merger. Council decided to get this person at all cost, and they actively chased me'.

Soon catapulted into another large scale merger round this time, not of Coalface's choosing, Black's vision for Coalface had to adapt quickly.

'I had a strong image of us merging with [another large institute of Technology] as like cultures. It had enormous potential, but my idea got dropped and shelved as we were pushed at our neighbouring university. I think that I failed to sell the vision. I could have written more and pushed harder inside and outside Coalface'.

'I had to become the C.E.O., working at what was wanted by the majority of staff and for a while, they were mostly keen on that partner. I had to take up that cause and vigorously defend and lead Coalface, especially when the fighting with the university partner 'became very dirty'. I wrote very aggressive, damning papers to Canberra. I defended my own and Coalface's integrity. The fight was important, win or lose, and the staff looked to me to defend them. We were insulted beyond belief, and I felt that I had to stand up for us'.
Eventually events moved full circle, and with some irony, Black's own vision of the Institute of Technology alliance came to fruition.

'I was never so certain that anything was right when that possibility re-surfaced. It is what I always thought would be best for us if we had to merge again at all'. He moved on it quickly.

**Russett:** Even from the time of his appointment to Metropolitan, Russett believed that it should aspire to being a university in its own right, albeit a specialised technological one.

'Long before the White Paper and amalgamations I was pushing us towards the University of Technology idea. I would have readily accepted the merger of two or three of us, the Institutes of Technology, into some form of University of Technology. I would have advised it, since it was in line with my own vision and a very powerful combination'.

The option was never seriously on offer to Metropolitan, because of negotiations taking place elsewhere in the system, and the later pressures to merge with less like-minded partners precipitated much difficulty.

'I am a fighter and a strategist, and I knew I was doing the fighting for others. Symbolically, it seemed important for me to do that! I gave messages to staff, by example and word, that it was business as usual, even when they were pretty confused, but I
went away and fought like fury for Metropolitan. I gave as good as I got'.

Russett never gave up on his view that Metropolitan might be a university in its own right, despite the bullying and hostility, and even ridicule at the suggestion.

He is personally extremely proud of the fact that, after all, Metropolitan is now a University, and largely on its own terms.

4.6 Cluster 3: Political aspects - the macro/external

Not surprisingly, in a time of intense political activity, the Directors found themselves intensely engaged in the political aspects of their roles, which would always have had such an element, but which became political almost to the exclusion of all else for a time. Much of that political activity took the form of lobbying government and others, building coalitions, negotiating, and planning strategy and tactics to manoeuvre their institutions into a better position - and a good deal of that activity took place outside the boundaries of that College.

Green: Finding himself flying to Canberra often to make face-to-face representations to Minister Dawkins and others, Green also became aware of the party-political volatility of Broadfields town. With every nearby electorate a marginal seat, politicians needed to pay attention and he admits to....
'Using every strategy I could to get them supportive. I also generated lots of community support via the media. The politicians could not help but pay attention'.

He even succeeded in getting a respected, retired politician to intervene and lobby on behalf of Broadfields in the Party Room; advising the government to 'leave it (Broadfields) alone'.

Orchestrating community support and mobilizing district pride in its history and its college was a deliberate strategy, since Green knew that the townspeople would readily resist perceived domination from the State's capital city. The local culture of independence was more enduring than the local conservatism about which Green had been warned on appointment.

By background and training a skilled negotiator, Green knew that he had to make some concessions along the way or risk being branded unduly obstinate and resistant. He made small ones which did not actually alter Broadfields desired future, but which appeased whomever he found on the other side of the table.

**Black:** Having taken up a bargaining position at the behest of his staff, but out of keeping with his own personal conviction, Black at first found himself politically off-balance.

'I didn't sell my vision of my preferred merger well enough - simply didn't put it about and push enough'.
Later when Coalface was under strong pressure to join forces with the neighbouring university, Black found himself 'digging deep' to become politically much more formidable and active.

'I went to Canberra and fought for our funding to be unbundled. I used old friends and networks in D.E.E.T. who knew me and trusted my integrity, to boost my case and back me up. I succeeded. I developed some very close links with both Federal and State politicians, partly fortuitously, partly quite cultivated'.

'When the negotiations with the V.C. of that university actually went backwards, and meetings were cancelled and we were being bullied and pushed around, I refused to go under. I did make concessions here and there saying "If it will help" ... but all it brought was more arrogance. I came back and back despite their flagging commitment and rudeness'. This strategy had become one of almost stoic endurance and persistence, so that blame for a failed round of negotiations could plainly not fall on Coalface.

Russett: Having been forced by governments into several protracted rounds of negotiation and manoeuvring with potential partners, Russett admits to 'having to use all my personal power to withstand severe bullying and to hold my ground'.

Negotiations were not always conducted with finesse. Russett describes one of the Vice Chancellors of a potential partner as a 'thug with a fine mind - very tough, but he never "cut any ice with me".'
Eventually, an ultimatum to the potential partner was cleverly made forcing that Vice Chancellor to become the intransigent. This extricated Metropolitan without attracting undue attention.

After several rounds of unsuccessful negotiation Russian noted that Metropolitan was 'world weary and battered. And so was I to some extent'.

'After all that, independence was very attractive as a position, for me and for all of us, but I needed to stay politically very keen to keep an eye on the internal white-anting and disloyalty. An active pocket of that popped up about that time, and I needed to try to read the real feelings of staff, or risk taking a stand we could not support. If you are not a politician, you are useless'.

4.7 Cluster 4: Political representational aspects - micro/interest

Political activity in the form of managing conflict, dissent, internal factions and differences was also very apparent for all three Directors. Not all the negotiating and politicking happened outside the institutional boundaries.

Green: Having commenced an internal restructuring and improvement of management capacity as early as 1987, Green continued that activity well into the 1988-1991 period. He saw himself as 'clearing the decks and making a much leaner, meaner, more competitive and efficient management team'. In
the process he was also removing or side-lining people who were unsympathetic to the vision and alliances he favoured.

'I effectively quietened a couple of unhelpful people, but a vociferous minority did keep saying I was wrong. They favoured an amalgamation with University X, and I, and most others favoured Y. I wrote a lot; I talked to people. I got around a lot and had umpteen morning teas with groups of people - always persuading, arguing, painting a picture. I had about two full staff meetings a semester'.

**Black:** 'My early vision for the University of Technology-type alliance was poorly driven by me, and had really only partly been "sold" when the possibility appeared with the neighbouring university. There was an almost straight 50 - 50% factional split at Coalface, and those for the neighbouring university option were the very articulate, politically-skilled social science disciplines. Their internal lobbying was formidable. I kept writing letters to staff, talking with the internal consultative committee and with Council. We had a real crisis on our hands, and I felt that we needed a lot of open communication to ease anxiety and try to formulate a more united position'.

When things got very difficult and stuck with that neighbouring university, especially when Coalface was being denigrated, as he perceived it, the internal 'pro' voice became very panicky and actually authorised Black to proceed with negotiations more or less alone and without much consultation. 'There was a real
crisis there, and eventually they gave me a freer hand to deal with it'.

Once through the extended and unsuccessful negotiations with that University, the re-emergence of the technology-based alliance brought a very strong internal energy to Coalface.

'I worked very rapidly with senior staff and Head of Departments only, not the unions, and not a large Committee. I had learned something about how to avoid clashes and keep it decisive. When I did open things up to get high levels of participation and consultation with all staff, it was only partly taken up by the staff. They seemed confident in the leadership's ability to represent them and do the right thing'.

Russett: Given that there was a significant pocket in the Arts Faculty who favoured amalgamation with a more traditional university, Russett had to work hard at consulting widely, and drawing out the views of all others. 'I eventually came to the conclusion that about 85% favoured a more technology-based alliance, or stand alone, and only 15% or less really wanted the traditional option, but they were very vocal, and one or two white-anters were very disloyal, I think'.

This pocket of dissent needed watching closely as it nearly produced internal panic at times. Russett's strategy was to work harder at drawing out and listening to the voice of the majority, and making that position widely known.
When the traditional University amalgamation finally was abandoned, he kept on reminding staff on the core business of Metropolitan, in order to keep staff focussed, and moving to a point of security.

'I felt that the smartest internal strategy was to stabilise the unrest very quickly, remind them of who we are at Metropolitan, and what we stand for. We really discovered some of our most basic values only when they had been challenged by others'.

4.8 Cluster 5: Action Detail

In referring to the day-to-day management and leadership of their institutions, each of the Directors revealed some of the details of style and their personal thoughts and feelings when the events of '88-'91 produced what they perceived as crisis points.

Green: He recognised that the outside common enemies were helping unite this management team, that his Deans were more cohesive than ever before, and particularly so after the State bureaucrat had suggested Broadfields was an efficient institution. He placed more trust in that team.

'I steadily grew to trust my senior staff more than ever, especially the finance man who is a cautious man. He balanced some of my potential excesses, and I listened to his judgements'.
'This institution hardly missed a beat. I, and a few of the others absorbed most of the stress and extra effort - really to protect staff'.

'I held to my own beliefs, probably feeling a bit more confident than some of my staff, but I felt very lonely. I was convinced of the worth of Broadfields, and my vision for it'.

I also felt very responsible to give the best quality education we could for the kids. It was very draining on energy. I was constantly putting out bushfires, protecting staff'.

'I involved senior people in the decision-making a lot, especially after I’d finished the internal re-organisation'.

'I worked very long hours - sometimes 20 to 22 hour days. Truly'.

**Black:** The earlier amalgamation which had taken place to form Coalface had been well-bedded-down by '88.

'I had developed a really good team by delegation, and I trusted and depended on them a lot. They were stable, capable people. Even some of the newer ones were very able'.

It was a strong foundation to build on when the big amalgamation round swung into action.
'Despite the early schism on where to go, the internal identity of Coalface was strong. There was never any thought of breaking us up, dividing Coalface. Wherever we ended up, it was going to be together.'

When it seemed Coalface was opting for a merger not fully in line with his own preferred vision, Black was willing to go along with his senior staff.

'They were making a rational choice with merits. I willingly, went along with it'.

When negotiations with the neighbouring university became very difficult, he persuaded others not to panic.

'They began to feel very dominated, but I did a lot of reassuring'.

'We were humiliated and insulted at times. I was humiliated and insulted, but I went back and back again to try once more. I was very persistent. I had to be for the sake of everyone'.

**Russett:** Also echoing the team leader theme, he notes that he had very able back-up and good 'thinkers' to support him.

'It's a tribute to others internally who've helped me step sideways and go to another issue, and who've followed things up and kept the place together. I relied very heavily on their advice and support'.
'My natural style is very assertive, but I've had to mute my natural style through this whole period, because of Metropolitan's culture, and the events, and because the senior team seemed to need me to do that. I kept needing to get full information and tread more carefully. I'm very decisive, but I needed to slow down.'

His feelings were also tempered a little. 'I was outraged at having our funding redirected to a supposed "parent" university long before any deal was stitched up. I get more aggressive rather than stressed when this sort of thing happens. I kept punching to the end. But I could see others on Council and on staff were worn out'.

'I kept reminding others that the show must go on. Amalgamation was a bit of a sideshow, but providing good quality education was always central. I guess I was trying to contain their anxiety, and protect them a bit'.

4.9 Cluster 6: Self characterisation

When reflecting on the amalgamation period and their leadership of it and throughout it, each of the Directors revealed significant aspects of their own history or background which had some bearing on what transpired. Each also revealed quite explicitly some of their personal values, ideology and temperamental characteristics.

Green: Having been recruited because of a past success at having transformed a smallish institution into a strong
undergraduate 'mass education' provider, Green was keen to do the same as Broadfields. He came with a successful track record, and saw himself in 'successful' terms.

'I'm a trained negotiator with some finesse and experience'.

'I see myself as a manager, as well as an academic and scholar'.

'I'm a communication teacher - good in front of groups - an award winning teacher....... I'm out of an educational discipline, and therefore have a few clues on educational philosophy matters. I think I'm seen as knowledgable on this. It all helped my leadership role'.

'I read a lot about leadership when I was overseas. It's a strong interest of mine'.

Driven by clear personal conviction about the need for strong, regional, accessible undergraduate education, especially for those families where parents did not have higher education, Green hinted that this might mirror his own personal history.

Of himself, he conceded freely to being stubborn, confident and a fighter. 'I'll always fight for what I believe is worthwhile'.

'I'm a strong orator and communicator, and behaviour describes leaders, not personality. It's about words and communication'.
I'm competitive, even a bit rebellious. I enjoy rocking the establishment boat. I can give ground, and I did in negotiations.

As a self-declared 'old war horse and fighter' Green thought that, even without the amalgamations, Broadfields Council may well choose someone else in say, five to ten years' time when fighting was no longer required.

He also described himself as having high trust in staff and a great deal of stamina. 'I have capacity for very long hours at times. I needed it during those years'.

Black: Also with a background as an educationalist, Black saw himself as having had excellent preparatory leadership experiences in his previous appointment in another State.

He had spent a month in an intensive course at Harvard just a couple of years before moving to Coalface, and that course had great impact upon him.

'It gave me a keen sense of my role as a C.E.O. compared with following personal beliefs one hundred percent. I learned about balance between the personal and public aspects. Sometimes, the public role requires a tempering of the personal'.

'My personal vision of a large technology-based university had to be put aside when the internal decision at Coalface went clearly for us to go with the neighbouring university. I went along with
it. I believed in being the executive for the institution's decided direction, not necessarily living out my personal wants'.

'I think I have a strong sense of duty'.

'I tended to reason with myself and persuade myself of the logic of certain paths. I pushed long and hard for something not in my own heart'.

He also listed high integrity and sincerity on several occasions, and particularly in the coalition-building phases of events. Loyalty to staff, deep persistence and perseverance were very apparent.

A slightly self-effacing element also emerged. 'My own preferences didn't matter that much'. 'I'm not all that authority-oriented per se. I'd prefer wisdom, influence and some sort of balance with my personal life. Total power or authority doesn't interest me much. It never has, and it didn't in the amalgamation period'.

**Russett**: Because he resisted alliances with institutions offering teacher training from education faculties, Russett was sometimes accused of being anti-education in the '88-'91 period. He pointed out that he had been a committed educator all of his working life, and his resisting such alliances had nothing to do with his personal values and philosophy.
'I have remained unmoved from my idea of a University of Technology. It is very solid, and I have never personally compromised on this'.

Other values were seriously challenged in the process.

'I felt a sense of outrage and disgust when an old acquaintance quite clearly double-crossed me and sold us out with DEET. It was against all sense of decency. I found his actions UNFORGIVABLE, and I haven't and never will forgive him or trust him again'.

'I wanted to consider the future in good faith, not be unnecessarily difficult and contrary, but my sense of our sincere consideration is that it was punished and clobbered anyway'.

Plainly Russett's sense of fair play and his personal values were sorely tested.

'I was obstinate only in that I refused to be rail-roaded and rushed. I dislike disloyalty very much. It really offends me and angers me'.

'I'm assertive and decisive, although I had to go more carefully in that period'.

'I'd like to stride, not tip-toe - maybe in a few year's time I can do this again. I've never believed in leading from the back'.
'I'm a strategist, somewhat contained by these recent γ enjoy multiple roles, and lots of complexity, and switching role to role, and scenario to scenario rapidly. I want to ahead again'.

4.10 Cluster 7: Reflections

Whilst much of what had emerged in the interviews was highly reflective, each of the Directors spontaneously offered some comment on the private and personal costs of the '88-'91 period - comments which were entirely unsolicited. They also noted their own professional learnings when prompted.

Green: 'I worked so hard and long - it was all consuming, exhausting at times. There were countless evening meetings and so on..... My wife was in a state of personal breakdown. She needed support. So did I, and we gave each other nothing'.

'Actually the marriage breakdown came after the worst of the amalgamation crisis, but I know it (the marriage) was certainly not helped by it all'.

'All considered, the personal cost was high'.

Black: For him, the costs were more subtle, but very painful.

'I have been snubbed, avoided and humiliated publicly over this. My wife and I were subjected to the most embarrassing, dreadful rudeness by the V.C. of one other university. I felt quite shattered that it could come down to behaviour so base'.
'There were long, hard months of pushing and working for which I didn't personally prefer. It was hard to be passionate about it. I had to dig awfully deep inside me to do it'.

'The upshot of it all is that I won't be a Vice-Chancellor or a top dog. It will be best for Coalface with its new partner if I, at my age, play second fiddle. I guess I have to give up something pretty substantial, but I can forego authority. I'll have more balance in my life. My first wife died not long back and I've remarried in recent years. I have a life you know!'

Personal costs aside, Black clearly felt he had learned some important leadership lessons.

'I would not be so laissez-faire if I was going through it all again. I'd give more structure to the staff's freedom; more clear direct statements instead of always giving choices and consulting. If you've got some authority, it makes sense to use it. Perhaps I'd even be a bit more autocratic'.

'I rediscovered the importance of separating people from role. I see it very clearly now. Some people dump on the person not the role. That's how I got personally abused and dumped on. But I found I could stay in role at times, whatever my personal views, so the two can be separated'.

Russett: 'That highly acrimonious dreadful shouting and bullying match with X whom I believed was an old
acquaintance, a friend really, after he had really double-crossed us, that really ruptured the relationship irreparably. I was very hurt and angry about that, absolutely cut up to think that he would do it to me. I will never forgive what he did.'

Despite that cost, Russett believed he had learned some things too.

'I learned to mute my style, to hold back and slow down, especially when we had to carefully steer and negotiate our way through a couple of very tricky negotiations. There were one or two very abrasive episodes. I learned to keep some of my aggression in check'.

Russett's personal life had also undergone a major transformation in this period including a divorce and remarriage. He did not link this with the events of the amalgamation period, or his role at Metropolitan, but it is noted that all three Directors had experienced major private life transitions in parallel with the huge transformations taking place in their institutions.
5. DISCUSSION - ADDING TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF LEADERSHIP IN CRISIS SITUATIONS

5.1 The Higher Education Context

The crisis of survival which loomed large for Broadfields and Coalface Colleges was clearly events beyond the boundaries of the institutions. Far from being created by internal lapses of leadership (Bearce et al. 1988:107-8), the situation in which these three Directors found themselves was one requiring rapid adaptation, strategy-development and intense reaction to those external driving forces.

There is reasonable evidence from the reports of the three men that all were thriving in their leadership roles prior to 1988, and that their institutions were being reasonably well-managed. Of course, this study does not provide any corroborating evidence beyond the perceptions of the Directors from their own quite possibly biased, points of view.

However, when the amalgamation period commenced, it did not take long for each of the three to experience some of the distinctive pattern of leadership in educational organisations.

The extent of the cultural shifts required by amalgamation in these Colleges of Advanced Education was likely to generate a great deal of anxiety amongst staff just as Harmon & Meek (1988:119) had predicted, and the tendency for universities and their like to be collegial, consultative 'communities of scholars'
certainly made that cultural transformation a difficult, unwieldy one to lead.

Professor Green recognised early in the piece that he would need to consult widely and keep people well-informed to proceed. Russett became frustrated by the need to move so slowly, but nonetheless, did so, adjusting his behaviour to the style and tradition of the institution, and Black also felt the 'limitations on leadership' (Green 1988).

As can be seen from Chapter 2, Universities have diffuse authority structures. Each Director recognised how slow that would render decision-making processes, and soon discovered additionally, how intense the internal political forces would become whilst groups within their organisations attempted to mobilise and amass what dispersed power and authority they had to influence the process.

Middlehurst's (1993:49) comment that leaders often get turned into servants of the group rather than masters of it certainly rang true for Black in particular. Crisis notwithstanding, he had great difficulty discovering and using sufficient authority to really direct Colllace's passage. Notably, when he did find and seize that authority, a resolution speedily emerged for the institution, suggesting that at least in part, the authority of the Director/CEO in crisis situations may need to be temporarily boosted and assured.
5.2 Qualities and Capacities of the Leaders

Many have attempted to profile the character of the ideal leader in high change situations and in education in particular (Kotter 1990; Warren 1984; Moses and Roe 1990; Bennis 1980; Greenfield 1980). Qualities of intelligence, health, integrity, courage, energy and openness mentioned in some way, and certainly appeared evident in all three of the study's Directors at various times.

Black specifically mentions integrity. Green spoke often of the huge amount of energy and drive he needed to invest in the critical years, and all flagged that optimism and some persistence to 'see it through' was required of them. None of this is surprising.

Perhaps more surprising is the degree of perseverance, persistence, doggedness, endurance, stoicism and even sheer obstinacy and stubbornness which seemed threaded through the three accounts of coping with crises. Whilst obstinacy and resolute refusal to bend or to be beaten are rarely seen as desirable qualities in leaders, it seems likely that in the circumstances of these three Directors, a fair measure of such obstinacy certainly helped to secure more favourable outcomes for their institutions, or at least prevent 'worst case' scenarios from eventuating. Paradoxically, this quality which might be labelled 'strength of resolve' or 'character' in this circumstance, could as easily be labelled 'rigidity' in another, and quite possibly was so-labelled by other parties in the amalgamation negotiations.
Also revealing is the large emphasis all three Directors placed on the importance of their senior management teams. Whilst it is not conclusively clear to what extent they see those teams as having been personally chosen, developed and built by them, it is very clear that each specifically recognises the extent to which they relied upon the depth of leadership talent, judgement and back-up.

Green and Black particularly spoke eloquently and warmly about the teams and team members in their institutions and Russett certainly freely acknowledged them but with less visible warmth and admiration.

It may be that the Directors felt somewhat obliged to appear modest, to take only a little of the credit for achievements and to place the spotlight on others in their proximity, although other statements throughout the interview suggest no difficulty in acknowledging their own talents and successes, but without unduly inflated egotism. Baldridge & Deal's (1983) 'humility' appeared in both and Russett and Black at times particularly as they indicated willingness to let the views of the staff prevail, and/or expressed preparedness to agree to mergers which would have cost them both the 'top dog' positions of authority.

5.3 Leaders and Followers

The psychodynamic view that leadership can best be understood as a function of the group or organisation (Krantz, 1990) suggests that leadership should be understood only in relation to the 'followership' characteristics of the group. In crisis
situations, group anxiety could be reasonably expected to be acute. Leadership is in part, therefore, judged as effective to the extent that the occupant of that leadership role can contain the group's collective anxiety.

All three of the leaders interviewed in this study make reference to containing anxiety and panic at various points, and to intentionally shouldering a disproportionate share of the pressure and burden of amalgamation negotiations in a deliberate effort to protect staff to some extent. In doing this, they become containers of collective anxiety, and the group, in turn, becomes temporarily more dependent upon those leader figures.

Whilst all three appeared to have high capacity to contain panic, Black's story most clearly reveals the staff's dependency upon him. Having been deeply stressed and divided about best strategy, Coalfac's staff seemed relieved and suddenly very cooperative when Black stepped in clearly with a new strategy to lead Coalfac toward a new and more 'comfortable' partner. Up to that point, Black had found it difficult to make many autonomous moves and throughout the negotiations his staff had obliged him to consult and seek authorisation from them at every turn. Exhausted and deeply stressed, they surrendered to his authority, relieved that something was now happening and relieved that they were effectively being looked after and protected. This has links with Green's (1988) notion of the 'Symbolic Leader', the one invested with sufficient authority and prestige to act on behalf of others.
In many respects, all three Directors were emotional transitions of the group since containing panic and depression is a key part of that management climate and culture. (Deal, 1990; Bridges, 1988).

It seems though, from what each actually said in that none was highly aware at a conceptual level were doing in this regard, even whilst they were in the midst of doing it. They spoke clearly of anxiety, stress and panic in others, and of the necessity for them to address and limit those feelings, but not of the 'normality' of such feelings in such circumstances, or with any clear recognition that such emotional upheavals tend to run in a predictable transitional pattern. Had they more clearly understood the leadership - followership dynamics in crisis situations, they may have adopted more active strategies to contain anxiety and support staff. Green appears to have intuitively understood this best, and his regular addresses to all staff seemed to best address the dynamic.

5.4 Leaders as Learners

Somewhat ironically, universities may be about the business of learning but not necessarily in themselves well-developed as learning organisations owing to the conservatism of both structures and culture. (Middlehurst, 1990). Given also the necessity for leaders to exemplify and model the cultural values they hold as important, it would seem important for the Directors in this study to be clearly capable of reflection in action, and of learning themselves.
All three did in fact, reveal clearly that they were capable of learning from their own mistakes, or rapidly adapting and renewing stances in the light of events.

Russett provides a clear example when he recognised, early in the amalgamation period, that he would have to temper his style a lot, to slow down and limit his impulse to charge ahead. His initial experiences had taught him that he would come 'unstuck' if he did not slow down and listen carefully enough to the internal Metropolitan factions and voices.

Each Director was also capable of reflecting critically on his own performance in that three year period and did so at the conclusion of the interview.

5.5 **Vision and strategy**

Green (1988) identifies the 'future agent' role as vital in higher education in the '90s and others fully endorse the strong need for managers of change to be very clear about direction and longer term 'big picture' thinking. (Hickman & Silva 1985).

The interviews provide evidence of longer-term strategy development in all three Directors in the pre-1988 period, before their institutions became part of the post-White Paper amalgamation events.

Green had been restructuring Broadfields to improve internal functioning, and had clearly developed a mass-education
strategy for the regional city, endorsed by the Broadfield's College Council.

Black had also been busy with strategic internal restructuring, consolidating and improving the composite Coalface following earlier amalgamations. He hoped to steer Coalface towards independent University status eventually, and believed in its highly applied, vocational education focus.

Russett had explicitly raised the idea of University status within Metropolitan and begun some College Council consideration of the longer-term strategy for achieving this. Whilst variously disturbed in their visions for the future by the amalgamation period, each was able to adapt it sufficiently to the realities of the situation and to influence others to continue to pursue it to some extent.

Black had most difficulty in this, temporarily submerging his own vision to the preferences of his staff, but later resurfacing it with renewed impetus. What emerges is the display of flexibility, the openness to possibilities throughout the process, but the firm, clear values and core beliefs which Vaill (1989) sees as essential in strategy development.

Having a defined, value-driven vision does not necessarily equate with being a strongly visionary, magnetic, charismatic leader, unless also coupled with exceptional courage, energy, decisiveness and insight (Kets de Vries 1989).
The limits of this study make it near-impossible to identify the charismatic leader, given that no ‘followers’ impressions have been gathered and that self-reports are the only form of data. However, there are small glimmers of charismatic qualities in each of the Directors, slightly stronger in Russett when he exhibits a great deal of courage and energy, and strongest of all in Professor Green when he reports working carefully at cultivating and holding staff support, using his highly developed oratory skills at large staff addresses. There is no evidence that any of the three were ‘charismatic’ in the sense of leading for purposes of self-aggrandisement or self-serving ego needs. Indeed there is strong evidence of each having passionate commitment to the cause of shaping, defending and creating on behalf of their respective Colleges.

5.6 **Power, Politics and Authority**

Of Madeleine Green’s five roles for university leadership in the 90s (Green 1988), whilst that of symbolic leader, future agent and team leader plainly have some relevance for the three Directors as discussed in the preceding pages, it is her envisaged role of Coalition Builder, which clearly links with matters of power, influence, authority and the exercise of each through political behaviours.

Notably in this study only one of Green’s five roles, that of Knowledge Executive, did not seem to have strong meaning for the three subjects at the time of interview. They each explicitly acknowledged and expanded upon the other four leadership roles when questioned, but each dismissed the Knowledge
Executive role as only semi-relevant in the amalgamation years. Of the five roles, the Coalition Builder one was most clearly and quickly recognised by each of them. It is also related to the two most clearly evident clusters within the findings of this study - Cluster 3, the Macro-Political (outside the College) and Cluster 4, the Internal Political aspects.

The nature of the crises in this study, occasioned as they were by external forces directly linked to Government initiative set the scene as a strongly political one. Amalgamation, merger or take-over is inherently a political act, with differentials in power base built on according to the political competence of the institutional representatives. The primary political skills of the Directors, namely, negotiation, conflict management and resolution, faction and alliance - building and amassing personal and organisational power and influence were likely to all be required in strong measure (Bolman & Deal, 1991).

Each of the three participants gives clear evidence of knowingly employing most of these political strategies, in differing ways and at different stages of the amalgamation phase. Each also invested a good deal of effort in the internal College politics, at the same time as figure-heading active political manoeuvring with other institutions in the arena, and with Governments.

Professor Green mentions his negotiation skills, his quietening of possible internal dissent in the form of would-be leaders, his cultivation of external alliances, always from a fairly firm personal base of clear authority within Broadfields. He gives no
signs of doubting himself, or his positional right and authority to spear-head the negotiations throughout.

Russett, likewise, mentions cultivation of allies, attending to internal ‘rumblings’ within Metropolitan, and the essential negotiating skills of both listening and assertiveness. He also appears to operate politically from a clear, authority base, which he has either been ‘given’ by this College Council or which he has assumed, since self-authorisation seems to play an important part here.

Hofereck’s (1986) description of masculine-style leadership in higher education as being relatively instrumental, hard-driving, competitive and unemotional is perhaps not unlike Russett’s self-descriptions. He recognises himself as having been aggressive, competitive, unafraid of a fight, intolerant of (what he sees as) disloyalty, and more likely to respond to stress with aggression than with panic.

This masculine style of leadership is more likely to be self-authorising, than, say, a more stereotypically feminine approach of group-based, consensual, shared leadership and emotional stewardship, and Russett’s approach throughout indicates that he virtually always felt authorised to act on Metropolitan’s behalf. Whether he felt authorised by staff and Council as well as by himself is slightly less clear, but the net effect is one of very forceful assertive stance.
Black provides evidence of political skill but interesting insight into the dangers of unclear authority and authorisation.

Whilst very able at the technical negotiating task, and having established skills in creating external alliances and networks, Black sought full authorisation for his position and bargaining stance from the Coalface staff and Council. When those same bodies were unable to give him either a clear message, unequivocal support, or a unilateral 'free hand' in negotiation, Black became severely hamstrung, and personally demoralised to some extent. He temporarily became 'the servant of the group' (Middlehurst, 1993:49) whilst the 'community of scholars' turned divisively in on itself, struggling to decide on a preferred institutional partner.

Black's style was, in a number of ways, more feminine than that of the other two participants - more sensitive, more compassionate, more passive and more group focussed. (Hoferek 1986). It resulted in his being temporarily unable to act with authority, plainly a severe impediment to any political strategy.

Despite this, Black does separate his personal views from that of the Chief Executive role, and indicates that, in some instances, authority and endorsement must come from the staff group, the followers, rather than from the leader per se. Of course, the more powerful combination would be for the group to fully endorse and authorise, and for the leader to internally personally feel fully empowered, and this may have been more
akin to Russett's and Green's circumstances. In any case, what was required was some balance in this regard, since a purely self-authorised Director, acting in Madeleine Green's 'Lone Ranger heroic style' (1988) would have been dangerously vulnerable in this amalgamation exercise, likely to be rather sabotaged or overthrown from within his own College. Both Green and Russett had to watch out vigilantly for just such unrest at key stages.
6. CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to explore the experiences of some leaders of higher education institutions which were deeply threatened by government-directed policy to amalgamate. The resulting crises of survival for these institutions occurred amidst the highly turbulent backdrop of rapid and biting change in higher education generally in the 1988-1991 period in Australia.

The three leader-Directors who participated in the study, reflecting on their experiences of that period, had no difficulty relating to the concept of 'crisis' and were each able to recall certain pivotal critical events or incidents with which they had personally had to contend.

Emergent themes from their recollections are consistent with those expected in the literature, in that three major areas of leadership focus and activity are apparently required.

6.1 The Importance of Vision

Firstly, issues of vision-building and strategy-development appear as central in crisis times. There is a sense in which purpose, goal or a 'fixed point' on the horizon may be the only certainty at stages of the crisis. For the organisation not to founder on rocks, it becomes necessary for leaders to work hard at crafting that vision, if there is time to give participation and endorsement, and to articulate that vision and strategic direction frequently, eloquently, both inside the organisation and beyond. Given that crises frequently occur without
warning (almost by definition), then the effective leader will have routinely paid good attention to vision building, rather than being caught unready and unfocussed. Providing the vision has been developed largely out of a participative process, then staff endorsement will be high, and a great deal of latitude given to the figure-head leader who runs with it when time is short and pressure high. Effectively the capacity to lead in and through the crisis rests in large part of what has been laid down beforehand.

6.2 The Cultural Dimension

Secondly, issues of culture creation and management are also vital. Whatever the strategy, organisations need to hold to their core values and beliefs in order not to feel completely unbalanced by crisis situations. Where the organisational culture had been weak or poorly defined, staff seem more likely to panic or become disheartened when external threat is experienced. Where the cultural values and meaning are clearly understood and identified, this acts as a strong support to all, including the formal leaders, when crises occur. This does not mean that change in values should never take place, but speedy ‘about faces’ will produce near chaotic anxiety and alienation.

The leadership role in defining, shaping and nurturing a culture is very important, especially in terms of shaping a style of everyday management and operations.
The crisis circumstances relating to amalgamation required 'deep coping' capacity in the Colleges of the three Directors. The traditional elements of collegiality, shared authority and participation in colleges and universities on the one hand produces a culture (and structure) where a number of leader-figures can be empowered. On the other hand, the culture of empowerment and participation can be a liability when very decisive and urgent action is required, and effective leadership in higher education requires a very particular balance in this regard.

6.3 The Psychological-Emotional Domain

Thirdly, crisis circumstances require strong management of the emotional or psychological world of the organisational members, and in particular, the containment of free-running anxiety. This appears to be best addressed, in this study, by -

- strong personal example,
- firm re-iteration of beliefs and goals,
- frequent interaction with staff and,
- with understanding of the often-irrational nature of the transitional emotions.

6.4 Key Personal Capacities for Crisis

To function well in these three leadership territories, this study suggests that leaders will require certain personal capacities. They will need to display tenacity, perseverance, even obstinacy. They will need high integrity and a great deal of ego-strength and optimism in order not to be crushed or overwhelmed by the many forces at work inside and outside their organisation.
The higher education context makes internal dissent a much more real risk than for some other leaders in more tightly hierarchical corporate environments.

The capacity perhaps most required, according to the experiences of the leaders in this study, is that of political acumen, of knowing where the power base is and of orchestrating and manipulating factions and alliances to suit. Negotiation skills are critical in the exercise of this kind of political capacity.

The political 'nous' required within the institution is slightly more complex and paradoxical. Whilst the traditional cultures and forms of higher education, as well as modern management edicts, suggest that leadership and power must be shared, this appears to be only partly true in crisis situations.

At the point of crisis, the leaders in this study needed to be able to confidently hold a tighter more autocratic grip, to consult and seek authority to a point, but then to be able to freely make and take decisions without further consultation - that is, to be and to feel authorised to act on the organisation's behalf, rather than being an instrument of the group.

6.5 An Integrated Approach

To have arrived at the point where such latitude will be entrusted to a leader, is unlikely to come from nowhere. It will be the product of a lengthy period of high quality strategic, culturally-enriching leadership in more stable circumstances,
and each of the three domains or territories will have been actively exercised in concert. Strategy and culture and emotional wellbeing are integrally linked and interdependent, requiring leaders to think and work wholistically rather than serially or episodically. In this way, the foundations of the capacity to cope with the crisis, are actually being laid down in a relatively more stable time.

It seems also, that the crisis times will render it difficult to decide strategy issues when they are actually occurring, since organisations generally become highly anxious and often conservative and backward-looking.

Strategy development will be rendered easier if leaders have strong internal reference points of stability and certainty - that is - they are sure of themselves, and sure of their staff's capacity, even if they cannot be sure of what is around the next organisational corner in the environment.

Some of the questions which this study cannot properly answer include those about how leaders might go about developing this certainty in themselves and in others' capacity. Neither can it be clearly seen how much of the crucial political capacity can be developed via training or some conscious learning process. On the basis of the reported experiences of the three Directors, we can see that certain capacities are required, but not exactly how those capacities came to be acquired by each. Such insight would certainly have implications for leadership programs
within higher education and, elsewhere, wherever crisis is becoming relatively commonplace.

Additionally, it is well to remember that this study works from the perspective of the practising leaders. It is based on their self-reported experience, and what they believed they were doing to meet crisis circumstances. A more comprehensive study would desirably also draw on others' perceptions of leaders' behaviours, since, above all else, this study reminds us of the essentially contextual nature of leadership.

Crisis has meaning in the context of stability. Leadership is inextricably linked with group contexts and followership. Successfully leading and coping in crisis situations is dependent on seeing the backdrop of how the organisation has been led at other times, and so on. In this sense, leadership in crises becomes just part of a wider, deeper continuum about which there is still much to know.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Adams, John D (gen.ed); Transforming Leadership - From Vision to Results, Miles River Press, Alexandria, VZ, 1986.


Baldridge, J Victor & Deal, Terrence E (eds); The Dynamics of Organizational Change in Education, McCutchan, Berkeley, CA, 1983.


Bossett, Steven T., Dwyer, David, Rowan, Brian & Lee, Ginny V; 'The Instructional Management Role of the Principal' in Educational Administration Quarterly, Vol.18, Summer 1982, No 3, pp.34-64.


Foster, William; The Reconstruction of Leadership, Educational Leadership in Schools Course, Deakin University, 1986.


Gronn, Peter C; *The Psycho-Dynamics of Leading and Following*, Deakin Uni Press, Geelong, 1986.


Miles, M B & Huberman, A M; *Qualitative Data Analysis*, Sage, Beverley Hills, CA, 1984.

Mitroff, Ian & Kilmann, Ralph; *Corporate Tragedies*, Praeger, N.Y., 1984.


Moses, Ingrid & Roe, Ernest; *Heads and Chairs - Managing Academic Departments*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, 1990.


Patton, M Q; *Qualitative Evaluation Methods*, Sage, Beverley Hills, 1980.


Tichy, Noel M & Devanna, Mary Anne; The Transformational Leader, Wiley, New York, 1986.


Turner, Barry; Qualitative Analysis & Grounded Theory. Lecture given at Swinburne University of Technology, 20 August, 1990,


Van Maanen, John (ed); Qualitative Methodology, Sage, Beverley Hills, CA, 1983.


APPENDIX A

PLAN OF INTERVIEWS

1 Introduction (self)
say: Outline research interested in Leadership

Crises in organisations & higher education

Discuss any remaining concerns re confidentiality

methodology

Q. Prompt question: Is there anything else you would want to
know about me? what I'm aiming to do? how I'll do it?
before we proceed?

Recorders turned on

2 Background

Q. Perhaps you can help me with factual background details?
When did you become Director? Were you in a leadership
role in higher education here or elsewhere prior to that?
How many years in what you would describe as higher
education leadership roles?

3 Q. Can you describe for me your present role as Director of
X?

4 Critical events/crises.
Particularly interested in your experiences as a leader in higher
education in the past 2-3 years. Say: i.e., since '88 White Paper
and throughout amalgamation period.
Q. In reflecting on your leadership experience of the past 2-3 years, what do you see as most **distinct critical incidents/periods/events** through that amalgamation era. Define crisis - check his understanding.

*My definition:* Crisis - product of original decay, internal dissension and power struggles or intense and threatening market competition - all endangering **survival**.

Often about underdeveloped strategy and/or culture.

Can be - acute vs chronic about protracted and for chaotic uncertainty.

Sudden, dramatic change which reveals problems of planning, finance, cultural cohesion, etc.

*Note:* To encourage storytelling. **Times of particular uncertainty or anxiety or stress?** **Times of especially vital decision-making, to do with institutional survival future?**

*Prompt with:*

Q. What happened?

What would I have seen you doing if I'd been there?

Typical behaviour?

Opinions/beliefs/what did you think about?

How did you feel at that time?

Emotional reactions?

Q. How did you endeavour to handle that crisis? **-what, when, how, why, etc.**
5 Vision
Q. Your vision for College/Institute in '87-'88?
Q. Your sense of protracted uncertainty/ambiguity?
Q. Your vision now? (as at 1991)

6 Culture
Q. The culture of the institution then compared with now?
   How have you aimed to lead and shape in this regard?

7 Other aspects
Compare other aspects of your leadership style THEN? NOW?

8 Green's model
Say:
Green's model of 5 key task roles of VCs etc in rapid change:
1 Symbolic leader
2 Coalition builder
3 Team leader
4 Knowledge executive
5 Future agent.
Q. What relevance meaning for you throughout this period?
   Which did you take up most actively?

9 Nature of educational organisations
Q. Often said that university and schools are fairly crisis-prone as an organisational type. Do you agree? How do you see this institution in this respect?

Q. What, if anything, have you done or are you doing to help develop the coping capacity of your institution? Of yourself?
10 Personal qualities and style

Q. What do you see as your personal skills/qualities as a leader? Have you changed in past 2-3 years?

Q. How would you describe your style? Any marked adjustments in past 2-3 years?

11 Reflections

Q. Reflect on your major learnings re leadership role and behaviour in past 2-3 years?

Q. If you could do one or two things again, what would you change? How would it be different?
Author/s: Cargill, Barbara Joan

Title: Leadership in institutions of higher education, 1988-1991: on the experience of coping with crises

Date: 1995-01


Publication Status: Unpublished

Persistent Link: http://hdl.handle.net/11343/39083

File Description: Leadership in institutions of higher education, 1988-1991: on the experience of coping with crises

Terms and Conditions: Copyright in works deposited in Minerva Access is retained by the copyright owner. The work may not be altered without permission from the copyright owner. Readers may only download, print and save electronic copies of whole works for their own personal non-commercial use. Any use that exceeds these limits requires permission from the copyright owner. Attribution is essential when quoting or paraphrasing from these works.