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MANAGEMENT OF CONTRACTION: A CASE STUDY

BY

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A FIELD STUDY REPORT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
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PREFACE

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The Nature of this project is that of a Case Study which outlines the impact of contraction on an inner-city high school. The study shows that "management of contraction" is needed to administer the school's rising cost per pupil; and for the school to continue to provide a suitable curriculum with reduced teaching personnel and resources.

The necessity to confront "contraction" is examined by analysing enrolment projections, which indicate a continuing decline in the rate of year 7 enrolments at this high school for the ensuing few years.

The instance that instigated this research was the threat of closure of the high school by the ACT Schools Authority, as a measure to manage the system wide contraction in inner-city high schools.

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An analysis of the economic, political and social context, at the time this threat was made, is discussed. This analysis shows how the bureaucratic decision to close schools was confronted by the communities in which the schools were situated and how these communities were successful in opposing immediate closure.

By referring to the past 16 years history of the Watson High School and its related school records, an effort has been made to see if the techniques and style of management and administration that worked in the context of growth could be appropriate to a period of contraction.

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In doing this, comparisons are made of organisational patterns and staffing patterns used to implement educational programmes now and those used in the context of growth.

The effect of redundancy and compulsory transfer on teachers has been observed, as have the administrations efforts to maintain staff morale by participative decision making and other means.

The urgency and necessity of the Teachers Parents, Students and Community to consider further measures to manage contraction at this school in the near future if the school is to survive as a neighbourhood school is also highlighted.

The Case Study has necessitated the use of school records which gave details concerning the school's student numbers, staffing, educational programmes and organisational patterns over the past 16 years.

For making these documents available to me, I thank the Principal, Mr Mc Ginity and I also thank those teachers and secretaries at Watson High School both past and present who have given me assistance in interpreting some of these records and by providing interesting and worthwhile comments on my research.

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