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LEADING LARGE, P-12, AUTONOMOUS, INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS: AN AUSTRALIAN STUDY

A thesis submitted by

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Abstract

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate how principals in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia enact their leadership, what they value, and how they perceive being effective in their context. The study intended to give meaning and provide deep understandings of what is required for the principal to be effective in large, complex, multi-faceted independent schools.

Given the absence of recent and relevant research focused on principals in independent schools in Australia, this research seeks to fill that void. Where there has been research into leadership in schools, it has predominantly been conducted in government schools or schools that are part of a system and has not involved principals in autonomous, independent schools.

A significant finding from the review of the literature was that leadership is contingent upon the context in which it occurs. Effective principals make small but significant adjustments to their leadership practices and strategies in response to their school's context. They are perceptive of the many layers (Hallinger, 2018) of leadership context.

Mixed methods were used with two main phases which were undertaken sequentially: (i) quantitative research using an on-line, self-completion questionnaire; and (ii) qualitative research using multiple-case study involving narrative description to tell the principals' own stories. Using qualitative methods generated broader perspectives and insights than would have been possible using quantitative methods alone. The quantitative phase of the mixed methods found what principals in large, autonomous, P-12 independent schools believed was required for them to lead their schools effectively. The qualitative phase developed a more complete picture of the leadership required, after an in-depth examination of the work of four case study principals.

This research has found that the claims made in the literature about successful principal leadership only go part way to describing principal leadership in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. The most significant finding to emerge from this research is that effective principal leadership needs the principal to be able to diagnose their leadership context successfully and act in

response. What has also emerged from the research is that being the principal of a large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia is a unique, complex and demanding role. It was found that these principals, while meeting all of the expectations generally held for principals in this country, are also required to fulfil the role of CEOs as understood in not-for-profit businesses.

One significant outcome of this research is the development of a leadership framework that appropriately represents the complexity of the role and responsibilities of a principal leading a large, P-12, autonomous, independent school in Australia.

This research sought to contribute, in a significant way, to the knowledge and understanding of contemporary leadership provided by the principal in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. The findings from this case study have the potential to encourage and support further investigations into effective principal leadership within local and international independent school communities. The findings have implications for individual principals, principal preparation programs, appropriate professional development and learning programs and the nature of principals' work.

Certification of Dissertation

The ideas, findings, analyses and conclusions reported in this thesis are entirely the work of Paul Teys, except where otherwise acknowledged. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Principal Supervisor: Professor Dorothy Andrews

Associate Supervisor: Dr Marian Lewis

Student and supervisors signatures of endorsement are held at the University.

Acknowledgments

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Study

This thesis[1] presents the findings from a mixed methods study of the leadership enacted by principals leading large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. The study draws on the perspectives, experiences, and philosophies of the principals to explain what it takes to be effective in their context, large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia.

The mixed methods methodology had two main phases which were undertaken sequentially: (i) quantitative research using an on-line, self-completion questionnaire; and (ii) qualitative research using multiple-case study involving narrative description to tell the principal's own stories, their individual perspectives, and to capture the principal's theories and beliefs in a holistic way. The findings provide an understanding of what is required from the principal to be effective in a school context of which there has been scant previous research.

1.1. Background to the Study

The principal of a large, autonomous, independent school in Australia bears two significant responsibilities: a responsibility to the school board of directors and the school community. Both considerable responsibilities bring substantial expectations and accountabilities for the principal in an independent school context. Being a principal in an independent school in Australia is a complex and demanding role, multi-faceted and carrying responsibilities akin to that of a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of a medium-sized, not-for-profit company, or corporation in Australia. There are no shareholders in not-for-profit companies, but in these school businesses, there is a multitude of stakeholders. An independent school principal is expected to be able to effectively discharge all the responsibilities of a CEO, answerable to the school board, and with overall accountability for the organisation's operations and outcomes. Independent schools in Australia are businesses, run like any business or corporation; they must be financially viable and deliver services and benefits that the customer (parents and students) wants; otherwise, their viability is at risk.

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[1] Note: APA 6th edition has been used in this thesis.

The school leadership and organisational literature is rich with findings and discussion about the traits, beliefs and practices of effective principals. Doherty (2008b) went beyond describing qualities and practices to highlight more comprehensive aspects of successful principal leadership, claiming that successful principal leadership was found to be a dynamic phenomenon that was resilient, flexible, able to adapt to change and responded to and be influenced by the school context. This study similarly takes a wide lens to the principal's leadership role in large, autonomous, independent schools.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to investigate how principals in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia enact their leadership, what they value, and how they perceive being effective in their context. The researcher holds to the perception that principals in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia have complex and demanding roles. The purpose of this study was to show the leadership required to lead in large, complex, autonomous, independent schools in Australia; schools that are governed at the school level, independent of other governing bodies, where principals are directly accountable to their local school board and directly responsible to their local community. The study intended to provide deep understandings and meanings to what is required for the principal to be effective in large, complex, multi-faceted independent schools. This research was designed to explore this phenomenon in depth. The central research question asked:

What constitutes effective principal leadership in a large, autonomous, P-12, independent school in Australia?

Four sub-questions were set to further direct this central question into areas for inquiry.

1. How do principals running larger independent schools in Australia view effectiveness?
2. How do these principals describe effectiveness?
3. How do they conceptualise their role?
4. What relevant models of leadership apply?

The research questions formed the basis of the mixed methods research – principals involved in the study provided meaning and understandings of what constitutes effective leadership in their school settings. A significant outcome of the study is a leadership framework that applies to principal leadership in these types of schools, presented in Section 7.2.1.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The absence of recent and relevant research focused on leaders in independent schools in Australia means that this work has significant potential to fill a void in leadership learning in this country and potentially abroad. Where there is research into leadership in schools, it has predominantly been conducted in government schools or schools that are part of a system. The literature review found just two independent school principals in the body of research in this country.

The research that has been conducted has resulted in an excessive number of qualities and practices that leaders are expected to possess and employ, to be effective. Robinson (2011, p. 12) sees this as a problem and argues for "a few powerful ideas, clearly explained and richly illustrated". Research that has been conducted has been done without proper regard for context, the situation and circumstances in which leadership is performed. The findings from the literature reflect the way the research has been conducted; the scope is too broad, and the outcomes too generalised. This study aims to narrow the focus to the group of principals being studied to those who lead large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia and provide meaning for the principal leadership required to be effective.

1.4. Definition of Key Terms Used in the Study

An important distinction needs to be drawn between educational leadership and principal leadership, which is referred to in this research as ***principalship***. The principal is the single head of the whole school, accountable to the board of directors for the school's educational programs, including how they relate to the strategic directions and ethos of the school. Principal leadership refers to the specific actions and behaviours of the single head of the school, the principal as distinct from the leadership that may be provided by a team of senior leaders or executives.

Autonomous is an important term used in this study. In the context of independent schools in Australia, it means that a school is self-governing or self-managing with an independent board or council. In independent schools in Australia, the board has great power and a great responsibility. Their primary duties are fiduciary responsibility to care for finances and legal requirements; setting the mission and vision; and oversight, setting overall policy and reviewing the actions of the principal and other executives. Independent schools must meet the criteria established by the relevant state or territory government for registration and accreditation as a school. Still, these boards or councils are the key decision-making bodies (ISCA, 2019a).

Independent schools are not-for-profit organisations. That means that no individual, principal, governor, or parent, can gain a benefit from the school's operation. Any surpluses that are generated due to the fact the income generated exceeds expenses in the annual budget must be re-invested in the school, and not distributed to any individual. The local board or council is self-governing and self-determining.

Culture. In this research, principals referred to culture, regularly. In this research this is understood to mean organisational culture (Schein, 2004); it is the way things are done in a school – a shared sense of purpose and vision; social behaviours and the way people interact with each other; norms; ceremonies; people and relationships; architecture, symbols, and artefacts; and identity and image. School climate is a manifestation of culture (Schein, 2004).

Ethos. Ethos in the context of schooling is used to describe the character, the guiding beliefs and fundamental values peculiar to the school.

Effectiveness is an essential term in this inquiry. It is not an objective or absolute term that is measured or quantified in this research. The concept of effectiveness has subjective meaning generated in the minds of the principals who have participated in this research. Principals were called to consider what effectiveness means in their context. This inquiry generated an understanding and assigned meaning to the term effective in this context. It is not the same as successful, which is often attributed to a measurement of student outcomes.

Chief executive officer is a well-accepted term in the corporate or business world; CEO is synonymous with the solitary leader of a business, company or corporation who is directly accountable to the board. The term applies entirely to the role of a principal in an autonomous, independent school. Indeed, boards use the term CEO when describing the role of the principal in their schools.

Other key terms used in this study will be explained in the context in the chapters of the thesis.

Anachronyms used in this thesis

ACARA – The Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority

ACNC – The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission

AISNSW – The Association of Independent Schools of NSW

AHISA – Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia

ASIC – Australian Securities and Investment Commission

ATAR – Australian Tertiary Admission Rank

ISCA – Independent Schools Council of Australia

ISSPP – International Successful School Principal Project

1.5. Methodology

Mixed Methods were chosen after the review of the literature found this to be one of the most appropriate for studying this phenomenon. The researcher wanted to achieve a deep and broad understanding of what makes an independent school principal effective in their context. Within the many designs that constitute mixed methods, sequential explanatory design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) was used for this research. The quantitative data were collected and analysed first; the qualitative data were then collected and analysed in the second phase in sequence. The quantitative phase of the mixed methods inquired into what principals in large, autonomous, P-12 independent schools believe is required to lead their schools effectively. The qualitative phase developed a complete picture of the leadership needed after an in-depth examination of the work of four case study principals. The qualitative methods generated broader perspectives and insights than was possible

using quantitative methods alone. The goal of this research was to rely as much as possible on the participant's views of their experiences and daily practices.

In this research, the researcher did not set out to prove hypotheses from anyone or a collection of educational leadership theories. Instead, this research set out to provide rich verifiable findings grounded in the standpoints and perspectives of principals themselves about the principal leadership enacted in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools. The mixed methods research had two distinct and sequentially related phases:

Phase 1 – quantitative methods were used in the first phase with an on-line, self-completion questionnaire; and

Phase 2 – case study methods were used in the second phase, with narrative reporting techniques to enable the four participants' voices to be heard.

1.6. Overview of the Thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters.

Chapter One introduced the study as a mixed methods study using the sequential explanatory design, described the background and purpose to the study which is to explore in-depth principal's leadership role in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. The chapter described the significance of the study; to fill a void in the research where there has been scarce attention given to principals in independent schools in this country. The key terms have been defined and the mixed methods used are introduced in this chapter.

Chapter Two presents the review of the past and current research and literature on independent schooling in Australia, the independent school principal in the Australian context, the view of the principal as CEO in these schools, conceptions of effectiveness as they relate to school principalship, and models and theories of educational leadership. This review established a framework for leadership in independent schools that could be used for the discussion of results. The significance of the research in the field of educational leadership was discussed, and a gap identified in the research relating to the leadership of large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia.

Chapter Three outlines and justifies the methodology used in the mixed methods study, explains pragmatism as a philosophy used with mixed methods and describes the sequential explanatory design that was chosen. The research questions that guided the inquiry are presented, the two phases of the research method and how these phases were connected are discussed, and the presentation and analysis of data in each phase are explained. The validity and trustworthiness of the investigation are considered.

Chapter Four presents the results of the quantitative data investigation, which involved 72 principals from large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. These results are presented using Microsoft Office 365 excel software and the SurveyMonkey data analysis tools. The main analytical techniques were descriptions, tables, and charts. The analysis of the questionnaire data found several distinct strands of effective principal leadership in independent schools.

Chapter Five presents the results from the qualitative data investigation which involved four principals in a multiple case study, using transcribed interviews from the case studies, observation notes and documents obtained during site visits to the principals' schools. There were two distinct stages in the analysis of case study data; the within-case analysis, and the cross-case analysis.

Chapter Six discusses the overall findings of the research in response to the general research question – *What constitutes effective principal leadership in large, autonomous, P-12, independent schools in Australia?* The themes to emerge and their related concepts are discussed in this chapter. Further, this chapter interprets, explains and adds meaning to the fundamental concepts that emerged from the cross-case analysis, which were discussed in Chapter Five.

Chapter Seven, the final chapter, discusses the overall outcomes, presents the major findings from the study by way of a leadership framework, establishes the significance of the research and explains the implications for principal leadership research in independent schools.

References are followed by Appendices which include the questionnaire and the Ethics approval.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Principals in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia were the subject of this research. The researcher examined significant current literature in books, journal articles, and reports that relate directly to school principals and leaders from business, social and political spheres. The review involved searching for references concerned with principal leadership generally, principal leadership in independent schools, and highly regarded social, political and corporate leaders. Amid these studies, national and international, the presence of studies devoted to principal leadership in independent schools in Australia is scarce. This chapter explores the literature related to the relevant components of this study. These conceptually include:

1. The independent school context in Australia;
2. The role of the independent school principal;
3. Effective school principalship – conceptual understandings;
4. Leadership theories, frameworks and standards relevant to school principals;
5. A tentative framework for principal leadership from the literature review; and
6. A discussion of the significance of this research.

It is important from the outset of this chapter to distinguish between: government schools; non-government schools; non-government, systemic, Catholic schools; non-government, independent, Catholic schools; and autonomous, independent schools (the context for this research). Table 2.1 provides meaning for these different terms to assist to orient the reader to this chapter.

Table 2.1

Meaning Assigned to the Different Types of Schools in the Australian Context

Type of School	Meaning
Government school	Government schools accounted for 65.6 per cent of students in 2020. States and territories are the majority public funder of the government sector in line with their constitutional responsibility. The Australian Government is the minority public funder. https://www.education.gov.au/how-are-schools-funded-australia
Non-Government school	Non-government schools accounted for 34.4 per cent of students in 2020. The Australian Government has historically been the majority public funder, reflecting its commitment to supporting parental choice and diversity in the schooling system. State and territory governments are the minority public funders. https://www.education.gov.au/how-are-schools-funded-australia
Non-Government systemic Catholic school	Most Catholic schools belong to a system that seeks to provide Catholic education across the country to all Catholic students, regardless of their means. Such schools are sometimes called systemic schools. Systemic Catholic schools are funded mainly by the government, and most remain accessible financially. https://www.goodschools.com.au/start-here/choosing-a-school/school-sectors/catholic-schools
Non-Government independent Catholic school	There is a substantial number of independent Catholic schools which are usually run by established religious orders such as the Sisters of Mercy and the Christian Brothers. Independent Catholic schools' fees vary from low to reasonably high. https://www.goodschools.com.au/start-here/choosing-a-school/school-sectors/catholic-schools
Independent school	What distinguishes Independent schools from other non-government and government schools is their independence of operation and governance. Apart from systemic schools, where the system authority has a management role, independent schools are set up and governed on an individual school basis, connected directly to their community and answerable to their own governing board or management committee. https://isca.edu.au/about-independent-schools/about-independent-schools/independent-schools-overview/

2.2. Reported Studies

A synthesis of national and international studies was completed and is presented in Table 2.2. A small number of studies (Day & Gurr, 2014; Degenhardt, 2015; Doherty, 2008b; Duignan & Gurr, 2007; Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2006) bear relevance to independent school principals and to this study. These references are relevant, as they contain research involving independent school principals in Australia; they just happen to be the same two principals referenced in each case. A recent review of the literature conducted by the researcher near the completion of this thesis found research studies (Anstee, 2019; Bagi, 2015; Leechman, McCulla, & Field, 2019) involving independent school principals in Australia. These did not explore the principal leadership required to effectively lead large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools, the phenomenon being studied in this research. Anstee (2019) studied independent school principals' wellbeing, an exploration of inhibitors and enablers of wellbeing. Bagi (2015) examined the experiences of beginning principals in independent schools, and Leechman et al. (2019) examined local school governance and leadership in systemic Anglican independent schools. Mulford (2018) wrote about measuring the success of an independent school for boards interested in measuring outcomes, to define key performance indicators of principals and senior staff. There was no other research of independent school principals in Australia found in the literature that was reviewed. Any relevant research devoted to principal leadership is from government and systemic Catholic schools, or their equivalent in international settings, as shown in Table 2.2.

Principals of large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia are an under-researched group. The study investigated this group of principals focusing on what constitutes effective leadership in their specific context. The perceptions, experiences and insights of principals running these types of schools was sought; with this research focused on how they enact their roles, and what they perceive to be effective leadership, in the context of the schools they lead. Given the purpose of the study, the review of the literature examined principal leadership in schools and the work of the chief executive officer (CEO) in businesses and corporations. The work of CEOs was important because the researcher held the preliminary view that the role of the principal in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools was analogous to a CEO in the not-for-profit sector. This research did not seek to examine school leadership per se, leadership provided by an executive team of school leaders, it concentrated solely on the principal's role.

Table 2.2

Research Studies about School Principals

Author (Year)	Notes
Anstee (2019)	A thesis that examined the enabling and inhibiting factors that impact on the wellbeing of independent school principals in Australia
Bagi (2015)	A thesis which examined the experiences of beginning principals in Australia to identify the most effective components of their preparation, the factors which helped them to transition into the role, the greatest challenges they faced and the rewarding aspects of the role
Bossert, Dwyer, Rowan, and Lee (1982)	This review of related literature and research prompted the development of a framework for understanding the role of the principal as an instructional manager
Brock and Grady (2012)	An outline of the attributes of successful school leaders, and how those traits manifest in daily practice
Cotton (2003)	This book identified essential traits and behaviours of effective principals to show how they achieve success as instructional leaders. The contents and conclusions are based on 81 key research articles from the last 20 years
Day and Gurr (2014)	Part of the International Successful School Principal Project (ISSPP). One chapter of this book is devoted to a case study of Rick Tudor, a principal who would fit the criteria for inclusion in this research study
Day, Harris, and Hadfield (1999)	A 1998 study commissioned by the National Association of Headteachers in the United Kingdom; the study is based on successful school leaders and head teachers who are recognised as effective
Day and Naylor (2004)	A report of a research project for the School of Education, Nottingham University, on themes of successful leadership in UK schools
Degenhardt and Duignan (2010)	A case study of Leonie Degenhardt, a principal who would fit the criteria for inclusion in this research study. This study examined her work, of creating change in a school environment
Di Natale, Drysdale, Ford, Gurr, Hardy, and Swann (2003)	This paper reported upon findings from three multiple-perspective case studies of successful principals leading successful schools in Victoria

Dinham (2005)	A study involving 38 NSW Government High Schools and the role of principals in producing outstanding education outcomes in Years 7 to 10 in these schools
Doherty (2008a)	A case study of Rick Tudor, a successful independent school principal from Victoria Australia, forming part of the ISSPP
Doherty (2008b)	A thesis – successful principal leadership, a case study of Rick Tudor
Drysdale, Goode, and Gurr (2011)	Part of the ISSPP; the research presented an updated model of successful school leadership based on Australian case studies
Duignan and Gurr (2007)	This book records the leadership contributions that 17 principals have made to their schools and school communities. One of the principals is Leonie Degenhardt from a large, girls, independent school in Sydney
Garza, Drysdale, Gurr, Jacobson, and Merchant (2014)	Part of the ISSPP; this study found that there were several core dimensions of the principals' leadership that led to sustained school success
Goldring, Huff, May, and Camburn (2008)	This paper inquired of how principals allocate their attention across major realms of responsibility
Gurr (2008)	An article on principal leadership in Australia and the evolving nature of the principal's work
Gurr, Drysdale, and Mulford (2006)	An Australian perspective on successful school leadership that focuses on case studies in two states, Tasmania and Victoria. One independent school was involved, pseudonyms were used so the school can't be identified. The researcher speculates it was Rick Tudor again, based upon the school statistics
Jackson and McDermott (2012)	A US study, offered practical suggestions and examples that purported to support school leaders realise a quality learning environment for their students
Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008)	An overview of the international literature concerning successful school leadership. These findings are organised around what the authors refer to as 'strong claims' about successful school leadership
Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2006)	A meta-analysis of the research on school leadership spanning 35 years and using studies from 1978 to 2001. The authors describe 21 leadership responsibilities that pertain to the work of effective school principals
McEwan (2003)	The book presents and describes ten traits of highly effective principals, with a set of behaviours and habits for each of the traits, using the reflections of more than 30 highly effective principals

Mulford (2008)	A review of the available literature on educational leadership and a report on the 2007 ACER Research Conference presentations
Mulford, Johns, and Edmunds (2009)	Case study research involving successful school principalship in Tasmania
Mulford and Silins (2011)	The culmination of a five-year research journey on school principalship that were shown to improve student outcomes
Parkes and Thomas (2007)	A report on the values practised by five government secondary school principals in NSW
Parylo and Zepeda (2014)	A qualitative study that examined how district leaders of two school systems in the US describe an effective principal
Robinson (2011)	A best evidence analysis of research on educational leadership
Schulte, Slate, and Onwuegbuzie (2010)	A mixed research study investigated the characteristics of effective school principals
Sergiovanni (2007)	A collection of articles on moral leadership
Spiro (2013)	A US study under the auspices of the Wallace Foundation investigating district schools in the US. The study identified five key practices of effective principals
Sterrett (2011)	This book offers practical, effective strategies for school leaders to use to be more successful in their work
Sutcliffe (2013)	The book describes eight key qualities needed to be a successful school principal from research involving 30 school leaders in the UK
Watson (2005)	This book identifies and describes 21 practices associated with effective school leadership drawn from the research literature over the past 30 years
Whitaker (2012)	This book describes specific practices that set apart outstanding principals from their colleagues
Zammit et al. (2007)	A review and synthesis of relevant research and works on educational leadership published in the five years before 2007

2.3. Context Matters

"One of the most robust findings from leadership research is that context matters" (Starkey & Thornton, 2013, p. 1). The context of the school is a source of constraints, resources and opportunities that the principal must understand and address in order to lead. Contextual variables might be student background; community type; organisational structure; school culture; teacher experience and competence; fiscal resources; school size; and bureaucratic and labour organisation (Hallinger, 2018).

Moos, Krejsler, and Kofod (2008) claimed that educational leadership and its successes are highly contextual and found that many concepts of successful leadership may look alike on the surface, but indeed there are significant differences, which makes comparisons very challenging. Their research posed the question – do we judge the success of principals according to the same set of criteria when the core purpose and function of schools all over the world is different? (Moos et al., 2008). A significant finding from the review of the literature is that successful principals saw the problems faced by their schools as being deeply rooted in the broader and more social, economic, political and natural context in which principals operate and effective principals were found to be adaptive and reflective, and able to learn from their practice and experience to ensure school success (Day & Naylor, 2004; Gurr, 2014; Southworth, 2002; Starkey & Thornton, 2013).

The need to examine the interplay between leaders and their environments, and the presence of numerous contextual variables that influenced leaders' behaviours and practice was found by Hersey and Blanchard (1982); which confirmed the claim made in this research that context matters. Yukl (1981) emphasised that "leaders must be flexible and adaptable to their environments" and "leaders who ignore these factors jeopardize their chances of success in their particular workplaces" (p. 144). Hallinger (2003) concluded that it is "virtually meaningless to study principal leadership without reference to school context" (p. 346). Mulford, Johns, and Edmunds (2009) claim the lessons from the case studies they researched is that we need to understand the complexity of schools, their environments and context and look for broader conceptions of leadership that service a range of situations and needs. The nature of independent schools in Australia,

discussed earlier, is that they represent a broad, diverse set of schools with wide-ranging ideological and philosophical views. The context for an independent school principal is vastly different from the contexts for principals working within systems, and other settings, which has been the subject of much of the research.

Two research reports raised concerns with the validity of research that was not cognisant of context. Day and Gurr (2014) responding to the international literature argued that:

> … the disregard for country context is worrying, as despite observations of the apparent homogenization of world education, there remain important differences in how countries approach school education, such as the degree of autonomy given to principals and schools. Expectations of the principal's role can vary widely and can sometimes even be seen to be contradictory (e.g. autonomy versus control). Yet despite these differences, there is often uniformity in how research is approached. An example is the use of narrow definitions of success for both schools and principals, with these typically constrained to student performance on external tests of literacy and numeracy. (p. 372)

Mulford (2007) claimed that at a time of substantial interest and investment in educational leadership; he is struck by the small number of studies related to research on Australian educational leadership. He was also surprised by the questionable quality of much of the research.

> It is necessary to move beyond the current rash of simplistic adjectival leaderships, authentic, parallel, strategic, democratic, instructional, teacher, transformational, sustaining, breakthrough, and so on, that bedevil the field towards a more complex set of relationships if successful leadership is to be fully understood and developed. (p. 16)

The important point being made in Section 2.3 is that leadership is contingent upon the context in which it occurs. Thus, successful principal leadership is contextual. Effective principals make small but significant adjustments to their leadership practices and strategies in response to their school's context. They are perceptive to the many layers (Hallinger, 2018) of leadership context.

2.4. Independent Schooling in Australia

There are two broad categories of school in Australia: government schools and non-government schools, which can be further subdivided into Catholic systemic schools and independent schools. Table 2.1 provided meaning to these different terms. In 2019 there were 1,078 independent schools in Australia enrolling more than 565,000 students, representing approximately 15% of the Australian student population (ISCA, 2019b). Eighty percent of all independent schools in Australia have fewer than 1,000 students, and 86% of all independent schools in Australia are faith-based (ISCA, 2019b). Table 2.3 shows the proportion (%) of independent schools by student enrolment and religious or faith affiliations.

Table 2.3

Independent Schools in Australia by Size and Affiliation

School size (students)		Affiliation	
< 1,000	80%	Faith based	86%
> 1,000	20%	Non-denominational	14%

Source: Data from ISCA (2019b, "Snapshot 2020", School Size 2019 & Affiliations of Independent Schools).

Data on the different types of non-government schools, autonomous independent schools and independent systemic schools, for example, were not found in the review of the literature. The best estimate of the number of autonomous, independent schools could be obtained by considering the membership of AHISA. There are "442 independent schools in Australia" whose principals are members of AHISA (AHISA, 2018, "About AHISA", para. 5), which is approximately 40% of all independent schools in Australia. According to AHISA (2018, "Joining AHISA General Membership") to be

> … eligible for general membership of AHISA, the principal must be the principal of a school which is a nongovernment school, is not run for profit and which has the right and the power to determine its own curriculum offerings and method of operation. The ultimate responsibility for the

management and administration of the school must be invested in the governing body and the school. (para. 1)

The most obvious differences between government and non-government schools comes from funding (Department of Education, 2020), governance, and the role and responsibilities of the principal. Government schools do not charge tuition fees, non-government schools do. Funding arrangements are discussed in Section 2.4.1.

All government and non-government schools in Australia operate within the constraints of state and territory and Australian Government legislation (ACARA, 2018) which together impose requirements in relation to financial management, accountability, curriculum, assessment and reporting. What distinguishes independent schools from other non-government schools is their independence, or autonomy (AISNSW, 2019) of operation within these boundaries. Apart from systemic schools, where the system authority has a management role, independent schools are set up and governed on an individual school basis, connected directly to their community and answerable to their own governing board or management committee. A comprehensive range of accountabilities of schools to parents, governments and other stakeholders exists in independent schools (ISCA, 2019a).

Most Australian independent schools are separately incorporated as "not-for-profit" companies limited by guarantee (ACNC, 2018). These legal entities are public companies governed by a board of directors sometimes referred to as a school council. However, there are some independent schools, as distinct from the Catholic systemic schools, such as the Seventh Day Adventist schools, the Lutheran schools and a small number of Anglican schools that, at least for governance purposes, have a systemic structure. McCormick, Barnett, Alavi, and Newcombe (2006) explain how this systemic structure usually comprises a central board of directors with management committees acting as school councils for individual schools. In most of these cases annual budgets and major capital expenditure plans are put forward by individual school management committees for approval by the company's board. This research will examine independent schools that are completely autonomous, with no accountability to another body, other than their own school board/council.

To provide an understanding of the independent school sector, general statistics (ISCA, 2019b, "Snapshot 2020") pertaining to independent schools in Australia are summarised:

- independent schools enrol approximately 15% of the nation's pupils, more than 565,000 students are enrolled in independent schools;
- there are 1,078 independent schools in Australia;
- schools' range in size from less than 50 students (12% of schools) to more than 2,000 students (2% of schools);
- the average size of an independent school is 528 students;
- 35% of schools are in regional and remote areas of Australia;
- 84% of all independent schools have a religious affiliation; and
- independent schools employ nearly 17% of all teachers in Australian schools.

As independent schools rely on continued support from parents and the community, they are more directly accountable to their immediate communities than schools that are part of centralised systems. As ISCA (2019c) stated, the "freedom of students and their families to exercise choice in schooling is one of the most demanding forms of accountability for independent schools" ("the importance of accountability", para. 3). Private funding contributions through the payment of fees increase the school's accountability to parents and the reality for independent schools is that they need to remain competitive to survive, consistently meeting high parental expectations for the development of students academically, physically, spiritually, emotionally, and socially. In addition, as outlined in their governance arrangements, by law, independent schools are expected to meet the standards of social and financial accountability applying to corporate entities or incorporated associations.

2.4.1. Funding of independent schools in Australia.

The responsibility for the public funding of schools is shared by the Australian Government and state and territory governments. State and territory governments are the main public funding source for government schools. The Australian Government is the main public funding source for non-government

schools, providing 76% of total government recurrent funding for independent schools while states and territories provide 24% (Department of Education, 2020). Non-government schools also receive part of their total income required for operations from federal governments and most state governments, however, non-government schools can generate their own funding, which typically comes from a variety of sources: parents paying tuition fees; private grants; and fundraising from parents, alumni, and other community members. As a general guide, private sources of funding (mainly parents paying fees) comprise 54% of the total income to fund independent schools, governments provide the balance (ISCA, 2019d).

The proportions of private/government funding vary greatly from school to school. The estimated recurrent savings to governments from the independent school sector is $4.5 billion per annum. The average government recurrent funding per student (2016-17) for a government school was $17,530; a Catholic school, $11,180 and an independent school, $9,350 (ISCA, 2019a).

2.5. The Independent School Principal in the Australian Context

The independent school principal in Australia bears two significant responsibilities: responsibility to the directors and to the school community. Degenhardt (2015) in exploring the role of the independent school principal describes two trends affecting the principal leadership, the growing complexity of the context in which they operate, and the increasing corporatisation of independent schools. Degenhardt (2015) claims, "the role of the principal has changed a great deal in the decades since 1992, the context within which today's schools operate is far more complex" (p. 6). An independent school principal is expected to be able to effectively discharge the responsibilities of a CEO, answerable to the school board, and with overall accountability for the organisation (Martin, 2017). This includes a multi-million-dollar annual turnover; delivery of the school's strategic direction; complex human resource issues; valuable property and plant; wide-ranging compliance areas; multiple stakeholder groups; project management; and public relations and marketing, to name a few areas (d'Cruz, 2016). AHISA (2011) describes the role of the independent school principal in Australia as one of autonomous leadership, that is, where

… leadership is characterised by the relationships between the personal authenticity of the principal, the school's ethos and culture, the leadership context as defined by the school's strategic direction and the principal's key roles of operational, educational and community leadership. (p. 4)

The autonomy that independent schools in Australia has brings with it significant responsibilities for the principal, none more important and demanding as the relationship of integrity which exists between independent schools and the students and families they serve. Within this context, principals must be accountable to their school community through the school board. This context for principalship is quite exclusive in this country, and this makes the role of the independent school principal in this country quite unique, as previously indicated. The researcher reviewed the prospectuses for several appointments of independent school principals (Kinross Wolaroi School, 2006; Queenwood School for Girls, 2013; The Glennie School, 2016; Townsville Grammar School, 2017). Statements of expectation found in these provide evidence of the complex set of responsibilities and accountabilities that must be met. There are strong and consistent expectations in the prospectuses about the expectations of principals in independent schools. The principal is expected to perform several leadership functions and in addition to this, there are traits and qualities that principals are expected to have. Table 2.4 provides a summary from the prospectuses.

Table 2.4

Expectations Held of Principals Expressed in Appointment Prospectuses

	Kinross School	Queenwood	TGS	Glennie School
CEO	✓	✓	✓	✓
Governance and board relations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategic/visionary leadership	✓	✓	✓	✓
Educational leader	✓	✓	✓	✓
Student engagement and wellbeing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Staff leadership, development and wellbeing	✓	✓	✓	✓
Community leadership and engagement	✓	✓	✓	✓

Organisation management and administration	✓	✓	✓	✓
Finance and resource management	✓	✓	✓	
Philanthropy and fund-raising	✓	✓	✓	
Risk management and compliance	✓	✓	✓	
Spiritual/Cultural leadership	✓			✓
School executive leadership team development	✓	✓		
Human resource management	✓		✓	
Marketing and public relations			✓	

Traits and qualities

Inter-personal and communication skills	✓	✓	✓	✓
Integrity		✓	✓	✓
Resilience		✓	✓	✓
Drive and stamina			✓	✓
Inspiring		✓		✓
Self-confidence		✓		✓
Passion for education		✓		✓
Good judgement		✓		✓
Empathy	✓			✓
Delegation skills				✓
Positivity				✓
Sense of humour	✓			
Self-learner				✓
Moral courage				✓
Openness		✓		

(Kinross Wolaroi School, 2006; Queenwood School for Girls, 2013; The Glennie School, 2016; Townsville Grammar School, 2017)

An analysis of the above expectations shows these to be common across all four schools, or at least three of the schools, who were seeking to appoint a new principal.

1. Governance and board relations
2. Strategic/visionary leadership
3. Educational leadership
4. Student engagement and wellbeing
5. Staff leadership, development and wellbeing
6. Community leadership and engagement
7. Organisation management and administration
8. Finance and resource management
9. Philanthropy and fund-raising
10. Risk management and compliance

There were other expectations which were required in two of the schools:

11. Spiritual/Cultural leadership
12. School executive leadership team development
13. Human resource management

The following traits and qualities were required by at least three of the four schools: inter-personal and communication skills; integrity; resilience; drive and stamina; inspiring; self-confidence; passion for education; judgement; and empathy.

2.6. Principals in Independent Schools in Australia are Chief Executive Officers (CEOs)

The researcher has observed throughout his professional career that principals are reluctant to be compared to a CEO as defined by the Australian Institute of Company Directors (2016), preferring to be viewed as the educational leader. Independent schools in Australia are businesses, run like any business or corporation, they must be viable financially and deliver services and outcomes that

the customer (parents and students) wants. Under company law, businesses cannot operate unless they are solvent, which means the business is able to pay its debts when they fall due for payment (ASIC, 2017a). The responsibilities of the school principal in independent schools in Australia is comparable to a CEO in the not-for-profit sector in the corporate world (Blackwood, 2019).

The responsibilities of the school principal in autonomous, independent schools in Australia is akin to the CEO from the corporate world. The role of the CEO in the corporate world is to:

- carry out the strategic plans and policies as established by the board of directors;
- oversee all operations of the organisation, human resources, and financial and physical resources;
- oversee design, marketing, promotion, delivery and quality of programs, products and services;
- develop and recommend yearly budgets for board approval and prudently manages organization's resources within those budget guidelines;
- assure the organization and its mission, programs, products and services are consistently presented in strong, positive images to relevant stakeholders; and
- oversee fundraising planning and implementation. (Adapted from McNamara, 2020)

Like a CEO, the principal is the head of the executive team and manages the day to day operations of the school, its people and resources. The principal, like the CEO, implements the strategy approved by the board and ensures that the organisation's structure and processes meet the strategic and cultural needs of the organisation (AHISA, 2011). The parallels to the independent school principal can be made and it is for this reason that the literature as it relates to the business world is relevant to this inquiry. The most prolific writing of leaders comes from the business, social, political and corporate world, the works dedicated to school principals pales by comparison. The review of the literature, as it relates to business, shows similar findings, as they relate to organisational and financial accountability, but additionally introduces different concepts not generally attributed to school leaders, however, particularly relevant to the work of independent school principals

in Australia. Overall, leadership of independent schools is becoming more corporate, and this role was highlighted by Degenhardt (2015) when she reflected:

> Leaders of independent schools can learn much from the corporate sector [and many independent school boards include individuals with corporate backgrounds and experience]. A more corporate approach emphasises strategic direction … It changes the focus from inputs (lessons taught, staff employed, students enrolled, funding secured) to outputs (effective learning, achievement of the school's mission, satisfied stakeholders). It holds people more accountable for their actions, and their performance. … using the best from the corporate sector can, however, assist schools to become 'great' at what they do. (p. 8)

Further, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) advocate that leaders in education can draw from the practices of businesses, particularly the most successful and sustainable. Autonomous, independent schools in Australia have a gross recurrent income ranging from less than $10M in some smaller schools to recurrent income well in excess of $20M and in some cases $50M. They have enrolments ranging from fewer than 50 students to schools with more than 2,000 pupils. They employ fewer than 20 teaching and non-teaching staff in some cases to more than 500 in other cases. In anyone's business mind, some of these schools are certainly medium sized businesses. The parallels with CEOs can be made. The boards of large, autonomous, independent schools in Australia regard their principals as CEOs and expect them to perform that way. An examination of the prospectuses (Kinross Wolaroi School, 2006; Queenwood School for Girls, 2013; The Glennie School, 2016; Townsville Grammar School, 2017) used for the appointment of independent school principals in these schools found that the vernacular of CEO to be common.

"The Principal is the CEO of Townsville Grammar School and responsible to the Board of Trustees for the overall leadership and management of the three campuses of the School" (Townsville Grammar School, 2017, p. 11). "The Principal is the Chief Executive Officer and is responsible to the Board for the strategic direction and operational leadership of Queenwood" (Queenwood School for Girls, 2013, p. 6). There is no ambiguity, and this is the expectation – principals in independent schools are regarded as the CEO.

While the fields of business and education might seem different where systems with bureaucracies and centralised control exist, in autonomous, independent schools there are similarities. The characteristics possessed, and the strategies/practices employed by highly effective leaders in both fields compare very well. There is justification for including the leadership lessons of highly effective leaders from business, social, political and the corporate world in this inquiry.

2.7. Effective School Principalship

Much of the research literature (AHISA, 2011; Dinham, 2005; Gurr et al., 2006; Hallinger, 2018; Kouzes & Posner, 2016; McEwan, 2003) focused on the attributes and practices of principals contains abundant studies and reports which make claims about the qualities and practices required for a principal to be effective. The claims made were that highly effective principals share a common and consistent set of traits and beliefs and that certain traits need to be evident to some degree in order for a competent principal to be effective, and that effective principals engage in very similar practices. Table 2.5 shows the qualities and practices that are most commonly and consistently recognised in the literature as being associated with effective principals. The research done by Gurr (2008) captures the essence of Table 2.5 and represents a summary of the literature findings:

- A clearly articulated philosophy and deep moral purpose;
- An unwavering focus on all students and their learning needs;
- A passionate belief in the significance of what they do;
- A commitment to making a difference;
- A focus on and valuing of people;
- Strong support for learning, growth and development of themselves and others;
- An expectation for high professional standards;
- Development of a collaborative, collegial and inclusive school culture;
- Leadership was service;
- Hard work that was accepted;
- 'can do' attitude to all they did; and
- Enjoyment and satisfaction from what they do. (Gurr, 2008, p. 6)

However, it should be noted that there was only one independent school principal included in the study.

Table 2.5

Leadership Qualities and Practices Found to be Associated with Effective Principals

Qualities and Practices	Relevant Literature
have a strong connection with the ethos and culture of the school they lead	Day and Gurr (2014), AHISA (2011), Zammit et al. (2007), Gurr et al. (2006), Mulford and Silins (2002)
have a passionate belief in the significance of what they do	Duignan and Gurr (2007), Gurr et al. (2006), Gurr et al. (2005)
place high value on collaboration and value the contributions that others can make	Jones and Harris (2014), Hull (2012), Gurr et al. (2006), Watson (2005), Cotton (2003)
have a clear moral purpose	Day and Gurr (2014), Garza et al. (2014), Sutcliffe (2013), Duignan and Gurr (2007), McEwan (2003)
have high expectations for staff and student achievement, are aspirational	Brock and Grady (2012), Cotton (2003), MacBeath and Myers (1999)
have the capacity to see and keep in mind the big picture, are strategic thinkers, they are visionaries	Spiro (2013), Brock and Grady (2012), Sutcliffe (2013), , Doherty (2008a)
have high emotional intelligence	Brock and Grady (2012), Gardner (2011), Notman and Henry (2011), Hoerr (2005)
have wisdom, show great judgement, and make the right calls	Sutcliffe (2013), Cotton (2003), Leithwood and Riehl (2003), MacBeath and Myers (1999)
have the capacity to empathise, and connect with individual students, parents, and teachers	AITSL (2015), Doherty (2008a), Leithwood et al. (2008), Duignan and Gurr (2007), Sergiovanni (2007), Zammit et al. (2007)
have an action orientation, with gumption (drive, motivation, enthusiasm, energy)	Hargreaves, Boyle, and Harris (2014), Whitaker (2012), McEwan (2003)
have resilience and fortitude, consistently optimistic	Jackson and McDermott (2012), Doherty (2008a)
value respect, promote personal and professional integrity, insisting on high standards	Brock and Grady (2012), Whitaker (2012), Stronge, Richard, and Catano (2008)
set the tone for the school	Day and Gurr (2014), Whitaker (2012), Duignan and Gurr (2007)

establish a clear focus on learning, for all within their school	Garza et al. (2014), Jones and Harris (2014), Parylo and Zepeda (2014), Brock and Grady (2012), Sterrett (2011), Sergiovanni (2007), DuFour (2002)
focus on students; bases decisions on what is best for all students	Duignan and Gurr (2007), Sergiovanni (2007), Gurr et al. (2005)
have a strong ethic of care and works hard to ensure a safe and orderly school environment	Day and Gurr (2014), Robinson (2011), Stronge et al. (2008), Gurr et al. (2006), Cotton (2003)
Are able to motivate and manage change in an organised, positive, and enduring fashion	Sutcliffe (2013), Whitaker (2012), Mulford (2008), Duignan and Gurr (2007), Watson (2005), Hallinger (2003), Mulford and Silins (2002)
are involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment	Garza et al. (2014), Jones and Harris (2014), McEwan (2003), Parylo and Zepeda (2014), Robinson (2011)
build high performing teams; they are coalition builders; they like coaching and mentoring others	Brock and Grady (2012), Stronge et al. (2008), McEwan (2003)
challenge practices and behaviours which are not aligned with school values and beliefs	Duignan and Gurr (2007), Gurr et al. (2006)
ensure quality financial management is in place, seeking and allocating fiscal resources appropriately	Jackson and McDermott (2012), Robinson (2011), Degenhardt and Duignan (2010), Duignan and Gurr (2007)
actively build a collaborative, collegial and inclusive school culture	Day and Gurr (2014), Brock and Grady (2012), Duignan and Gurr (2007), Gurr et al. (2005)
lead change, as they challenge the status quo	Drysdale, Bennett, Murakami, Johansson, and Gurr (2014), Duignan and Gurr (2007), Gurr et al. (2005)
work tirelessly on effective communication and community relations	Stronge et al. (2008), Gurr et al. (2006), Cotton (2003)

Self-leadership and certain traits and qualities are held to be important by some of the leading principal organisations. Table 2.6 shows how three principal organisations (AHISA, 2011; AITSL, 2019; Ontario Institute for Education Leadership, 2013) identified with traits and characteristics of effective principals.

Table 2.6

Traits and Characteristics of Effective Principals from Three Leadership Organisations

AHISA	AITSL	ONTARIO
Self-awareness	Emotional intelligence & empathy	Emotionally intelligent
Clear values and moral purpose	Trustworthiness	Optimistic
Acknowledgment of the spiritual dimensions of life	Effective communicator, collaborator & influencer	Proactive
Integrity and authenticity	Ethical behaviour	Resilient
Courage and resilience	Resilience	Able to display self-efficacy
Being reflective	Skilled networker	
Valuing own health and wellbeing	Attention to personal wellbeing	

However, in her study of a successful independent school principal in Victoria, Doherty (2008a) went beyond describing qualities and practices and highlighted further aspects of successful principal leadership, which include:

- the principal's leadership capabilities and school context and situation;
- compatibility and affinity with the school;
- an awareness of community capacity;
- growing of self professionally, and pedagogically; and
- the reciprocal influence between the principal and the school.

Doherty (2008a) asserts that the study also showed that "successful principal leadership was found to be a dynamic phenomenon that was resilient, flexible, able to adapt to change and control it, and responded to and influenced the school context" (p. 72).

2.8. Other Conceptions of Effectiveness

This review has analysed the literature on principals and their leadership and found that the research is concentrated on principals in government schools and Catholic systemic schools. As the research seeks to explore the principal leadership required to effectively lead large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools, different conceptions of effectiveness had to be found, and needed to emerge from the research. Other problems with the literature conceptions of effectiveness is that they were restricted to describing a set of values and practices that the leader possesses and uses, and the measures used in the literature research to evaluate the effectiveness of a principal focused on how principals influence student learning outcomes as the main gauge, were too narrow (Gurr et al., 2006; Zammit et al., 2007). Drysdale et al. (2014) and Hallinger (2018) showed that we needed to understand the complexity of schools, their environments and context and look for broader conceptions of leadership that service a range of situations and needs. They claimed that we needed to embrace a wider view of leadership and not be constrained by stereotypical definitions that undermine the complexity of leadership. Several studies have moved toward a broader conception of effectiveness, which was the aim of this research.

1. Spiro (2013) identified five key practices of effective principals: shaping a vision of success for all students; creating a climate hospitable to education; cultivating leadership in others; improving instruction; and being good (business) managers.

2. Garza et al. (2014) as part of the ISSPP found that there were several core dimensions of the principals' leadership: the principals' clearly articulated views on education helped their schools set appropriate directions; they were all concerned with the professional development of teachers to build capacity and teacher leadership; all principals were instructional leaders who influenced teaching and learning; they exhibited

other qualities such as resilience and their motivation to sustain their efforts over time; and another important dimension was building community.

3. Garza et al. (2014) found from their analysis that the successful principals studied possessed particular affective and personal dispositions, which were common across the principals studied: they were driven by a philosophy of social justice; they ascribed to a strong notion of care; they were highly ethical and morally responsible; they demonstrated a high degree of resiliency and persistence; and most importantly they were courageous.

4. In a mixed analysis study conducted in the south-west of the United States, Schulte et al. (2010) found five meta-themes which emerged to describe the characteristics of effective principals: responsible and supportive; being impartial; straightforward, task-oriented, and communicative; professional and facilitating; collaborative, organised, and inclusive.

In this research, effectiveness is not meant in any objective way, nor is there any attempt to test/assess whether a principal is indeed, effective. It is meant purely as a mental model about whether characteristics and practices, nominated by the principals themselves, are viewed by them to contribute to effective leadership. There is significant research in the field of principal leadership which may be relevant to principals in independent schools, this inquiry seeks to find out if it is relevant, and moreover, answer the question – what constitutes effective principal leadership in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia?

2.9. Theories and Models of Educational Leadership

The literature review has identified many theories that may, or may not, be relevant to this study. Hall, Childs-Bowen, Cunningham-Morris, Pajardo, and Simeral (2016) claim, "there are many theories and approaches concerning the particular skills and strategies of effective leadership, and attempting to cover each component would prove cumbersome, exhausting, and fruitless" (p. 7). The purpose of this study is to discover, which, if any, of the many leadership theories might have relevance to the work of independent school principals in the contexts in which they

enact leadership. This inquiry explores the principals leading large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. A review of the leadership field by Dinh et al. (2014) identified a total of 66 different domains of leadership theory, and they state:

> Although this diversity has brought forth novel perspectives that enrich our knowledge of leadership, it also presents several challenges that future research must address. Notably, research needs to develop integrative perspectives that consider how disparate leadership theories relate or operate simultaneously to influence the emergence of leadership phenomena. (p. 55)

Earlier studies reported in AHISA (2011) claim that there are some 50 models of school leadership currently in use in Australia. And according to A. Morgan (2008):

> … the educational literature has popularised models of school leadership such as instructional, transformational, strategic, educative, and servant leadership. Whilst valuable as ways of conceptualising leadership styles, worldviews, traits, roles and functions of individual principals, these models fall short of capturing the dynamic between the outcomes of leadership and the leadership process in contemporary school contexts. (p. iii)

Prior to the late 20th century, Shantz (2015) reported that "early leadership theories tended to focus upon the characteristics and behaviours of successful leaders. The Great Man theory was based on the belief that leaders are exceptional people, born with innate qualities and were destined to lead" (p. 28). Until the late 20th century much of the research focused on the attributes (theory) of leadership (Bryman, Collinson, Grint, Jackson, & Uhl-Bien, 2011). The review of leadership theories and models or conceptions of leadership that are relevant to this research ended with an understanding that the nature of the work of the independent school principal, the contexts in which they work and the complexity of the role requires research to go beyond the contemporary theories of leadership. Owens and Valesky (2007) claim that the basic concepts of educational leadership will always be a works in progress because

> [t]he relentless, ceaseless interplay between the search for a better understanding of human nature and behaviour, on the one hand, and the

evolutionary development of social and political beliefs and values in our culture, on the other hand, creates a dynamic environment in which the basic concepts of education and educational leadership are endlessly incomplete, always works in progress. (p. 23)

There is no panacea to be found within the literature; no one size fits all solution. "Leadership is not a talent that you have or don't have. In fact, it is not a talent but an observable, learnable set of skills and abilities" (Kouzes & Posner, 2016, p. 5). The field of leadership theory has evolved greatly from its initial beliefs that leadership was an inherent ability or set of behaviours or traits one could possess.

2.10. Leadership Frameworks and Standards from the Literature

While none of the many frameworks and standards of school leadership in use across Australia and internationally (AHISA, 2011; AITSL, 2019; Education Victoria, 2013; Hall et al., 2016; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015; New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 2018; Ontario Institute for Education Leadership, 2013; United Kingdom Department for Education, 2015) captures all of the complexity of school leadership, the models have enough in common to begin to develop a picture of some of the essential elements of effective principal leadership. I hold to the view that the framework of principal leadership required for today's autonomous, independent schools in Australia needs to respond to the complex and multi-faceted responsibilities and accountabilities of the role and the context in which it is enacted.

Other models or frameworks have been developed by educational organisations that may have import to this research. Education Victoria (2013) created a developmental learning framework for school leaders, a profile with five major areas of leadership practice: technical; human; educational; symbolic; and cultural. AHISA (2011) developed a model of autonomous school principalship for independent schools in Australia. In AHISA's model, effective leadership in independent schools is a result of the strong connection between the principal's values and beliefs and the school's ethos and culture and the leadership context created by the school's strategic direction. It involves the principal's capacity to lead

in areas of operational, educational and community. In this model, the principal's self-leadership sits at the core of successful school leadership (AHISA, 2011). The New Zealand Council for Educational Research (2018) developed a framework for the advancement of leadership in New Zealand. A key difference between New Zealand and other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries is its system of self-managing schools, like that in Australia. In the New Zealand system, all principals work as chief executives of their boards to support the development of policy and take responsibility to carry out the policies within the context of their local community. The New Zealand Educational Leadership Capability Framework has nine educational leadership capabilities. The Framework was intended to provide high-level guidelines for leadership development based on shared understandings of what leadership in different spheres of influence looks like in practice.

AITSL (2019) developed the Australian Professional Standard for Principals, the framework document used in most Australian jurisdictions in the development of its leadership policies and programs, although some states have developed specific frameworks for their context. The Standard describes what principals need to know, understand and do in their work and is accompanied by profiles that describe the role of the school leader on a continuum from least to most complex, see Figure 2.1. The Standard describes the main role of school principals and sets out the broad responsibilities of the role that enable them to do this:

- Leading teaching and learning;
- Developing self and others;
- Leading improvement, innovation and change;
- Leading the management of the school; and
- Engaging and working with the community.
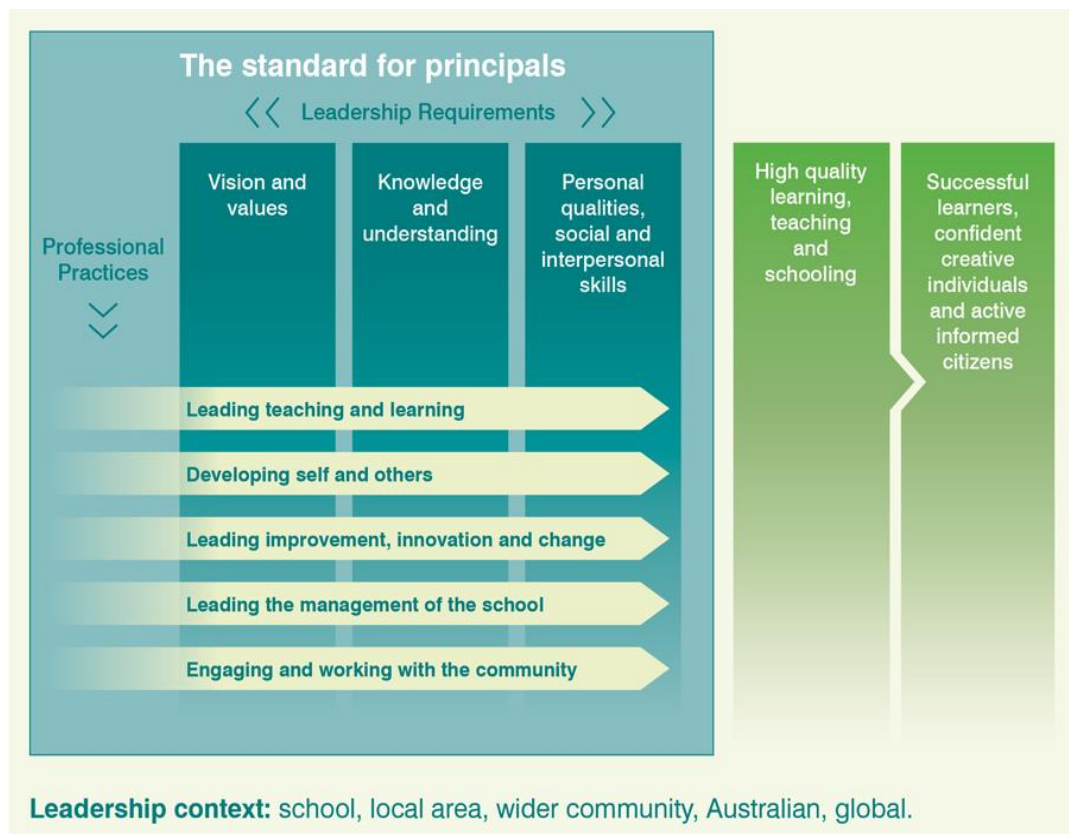
Figure 2.1. The AITSL Standard for Principals

(AITSL, 2019)

In the USA, The Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015 were developed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (2015), a consortium of professional organisations committed to advancing school leadership. The standards arose after extensive consultation with schools and district leaders, a review of empirical research, and input from researchers and the public. The Standards are foundational to all levels of educational leadership in the United States of America (USA); they are the qualities and values of leadership work that research and practice suggest are integral to student success. The Standards reflect the following interdependent domains:

1. Mission, Vision, and Core Values;
2. Ethics and Professional Norms;
3. Equity and Cultural Responsiveness;
4. Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment;
5. Community of Care and Support for Students;
6. Professional Capacity of School Personnel;
7. Professional Community for Teachers and Staff;

8. Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community;

9. Operations and Management; and

10. School Improvement.

The National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers was developed by the United Kingdom Department for Education (2015) for headteachers in English schools. The term headteacher in the United Kingdom is synonymous with our principal. The standards are described as guidance for headteachers, aspiring headteachers and governing boards. The National Standards of Excellence for Headteachers are set out in four domains, with six key characteristics in each domain. The four domains are:

- Qualities and knowledge – hold and articulate clear values and moral purpose, focused on providing a world class education for the pupils they serve

- Pupils and staff – demand ambitious standards for all pupils, overcoming disadvantage and advancing equality, instilling a strong sense of accountability in staff for the impact of their work on pupils' outcomes

- Systems and process – provide a safe, calm and well-ordered environment for all pupils and staff, focused on safeguarding pupils and developing their exemplary behaviour in school and in the wider society

- The self-improving school system – develop effective relationships with fellow professionals and colleagues in other public services to improve academic and social outcomes for all pupils

Within each domain there are six key characteristics expected of the nation's headteachers. While they are too numerous to list here, for illustrative purposes, one has been included in each domain,

The Ontario Institute for Education Leadership (2013) introduced a framework to provide principals, vice-principals, system leaders and aspiring leaders with a leadership pathway. The framework identified with five core leadership practices:

1. Setting goals;

2. Aligning resources with priorities;

3. Promoting collaborative learning cultures;

4. Using data; and

5. Engaging in courageous conversations.

Of interest in the Ontario Framework is the reference to personal leadership resources deemed as important in enacting leadership practices.

The literature review has found a variety of frameworks that might have relevance to the leadership provided by principals in independent schools. I scanned the frameworks to identify the concepts that appeared most frequently and have most relevance to principalship in independent schools to develop a conceptual framework, discussed in Section 2.11.

2.11. A Conceptual Framework for Principal Leadership of Large Independent Schools in Australia

Based on the literature review presented in this chapter, Figure 2.2 provides components for consideration that could be used for a leadership framework in independent schools. This conceptual framework considers the role and responsibilities of the independent school principal and with consideration to the context within which they work. The framework is a set of leadership responsibilities already reported on that may have the greatest significance and relevance to principals leading large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. There has been no attempt to draw connections between the responsibilities of leadership, or to assign emphasis or priority, simply to identify those which feature most prominently in the research.

operational	school performance	spiritual, moral and ethical	relational and community
cultural	educational	visionary	strategic
change	contingency	distributed	sustainable
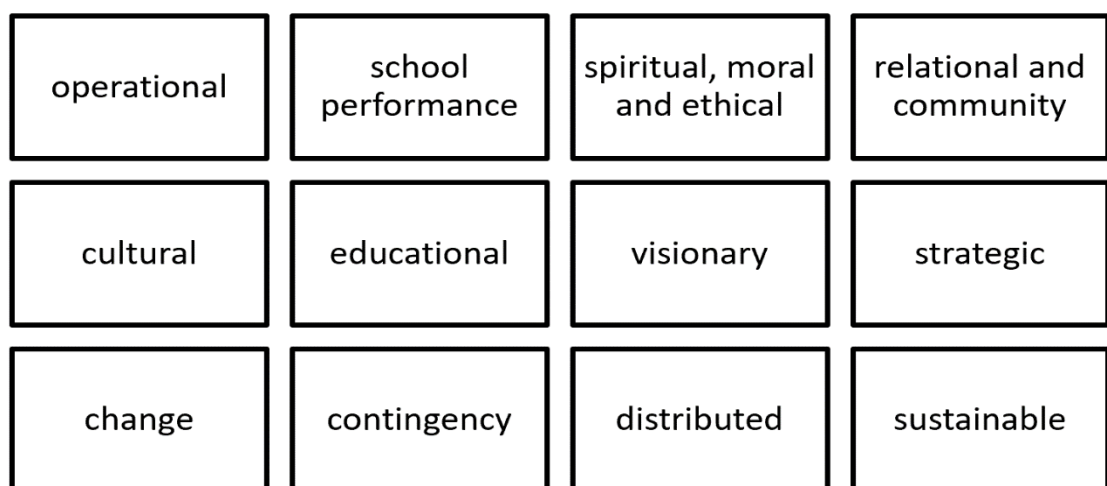
Figure 2.2. Conceptual Framework for Leadership of Large, P-12, Autonomous, Independent Schools in Australia

2.12. A Gap Exists in the Research

There is no shortage of studies on educational leadership, as a general concept, about leaders and principals in schools. Leithwood and Riehl (2003) describe six claims about effective leadership in schools which they consider to be generalisable to most school contexts. Di Natale et al. (2003) argue that while these findings are meant to be robust and generalisable across contexts, most of the literature reviewed is from North America or the United Kingdom, and it is problematic to generalise from international research to specific national contexts because of the important differences that exist. "One of those important differences relates to the degree of autonomy given to principals and schools across international contexts" (Gurr et al., 2003, p. 21).

General conceptions of leadership are well researched in the literature. Hall et al. (2016) claim, "leadership is a complex, subtle, delicate, and dynamic concept" (p. 2). The research by Drysdale et al. (2014) shows that we may need to redefine and recast our images of who school principals are today, and what they do. The research in the field has not sought to understand the complexity of schools, their environments and context and look for conceptions of leadership that are attributable to independent schools. Bryman et al. (2011) propose, "leadership is a phenomenon focused on vision, challenge, collaboration, process and product" (p. 33). And AHISA (2011), "effective school leadership plays a key role in improving school outcomes by influencing the motivations and capacities of teachers, as well as school climate and environment" (p. 1).

Zammit et al. (2007) advocate that future research on school leadership in Australia move away from investigating traits, cognitions and behaviours of individual leaders to study leaders in action in their school communities. They argue that research about leaders in context is needed to develop knowledge of how the professional practices, attributes and capabilities of quality leaders can be developed to fit leaders for the diverse contexts in which they are required to work. These claims are consistent with claims made by Gurr et al. (2003) and Mulford (2007). Leithwood et al. (2008) provided an overview of the international literature concerning successful school leadership. Their study focused on school leadership more broadly; discussing a broad range of leadership roles in school. It was focused on the principal, as *the* leader. The prime purpose of their research was to summarise

the main findings from the wealth of empirical studies undertaken in the leadership field. However, they claim that the gap in our knowledge about successful leadership is due to the lack of quality research in the area (p. 36).

This research will aim to embrace a view of leadership that has relevance for independent schools and appreciates the complexity of principal leadership in these schools. Robinson (2011) advocates that focusing on the capabilities and practices of principals and departing from the traditional emphasis of leadership styles is far more flexible and inclusive. Robinson (2011), while not aware of such, is advocating research of the kind proposed in this inquiry. There is no evidence that this group of principals, principals leading independent schools in Australia, has been the subject of any significant research in country.

Table 2.1 provided a summary of the research studies that have been dedicated to school principals. Of more than 30 studies that were reviewed; there are only two independent school principals the subject of all this inquiry: Rick Tudor of Trinity Grammar School (Melbourne); and Dr Leoni Degenhardt of Loreto Normanhurst (Sydney).

2.13. The Significance of this Research

The literature review exposed the paucity of recent and relevant research focused on leaders of independent schools in Australia. Where there is research into leadership in schools, it has been conducted in government schools or schools that are part of a system. This study focused on a group of principals who lead large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. The literature inundates us with traits, qualities, practices and strategies that researchers and writers argue are relevant to principals in schools. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) stressed that individual skills or attributes may not be enough to guarantee success, "even with good diagnostic skills, leaders may still not be effective unless they can adapt their leadership style to meet the demands of their environment" (p. 149).

Moreover, there is a range of approaches to leadership, theories and models which have variously been advanced by researchers and writers arguing their relevance to principal leadership. This research is concerned about the relevance to the leadership of large independent schools in Australia. The absence of recent and relevant research focused on leaders in independent schools in Australia and the fact

that a lot of the international research is now dated (more than 10 years old), means that this work has significant potential to address a void in leadership learning in this country and abroad. Research that has been conducted has not specifically taken context into account, the situation and circumstances in which leadership is performed.

McEwan (2003) identified 10 traits of highly effective principals and for each of the 10 traits, a set of behaviours which she calls benchmarks. McEwan (2003) nominates one of the traits as communicator; "the highly effective principal is a communicator – a genuine and open human being with the capacity to listen, to empathise, and connect with individual students, parents and teachers in productive, helping, and healing ways, as well as the ability to teach, present and motivate people in larger group settings" (p. 19). And for the communicator trait, McEwan nominates a set of 19 behaviours and habits for the trait. The math is simple, 10 traits with that many behaviours associated with each; we are dealing with over 100 behaviours that the highly effective principal is to command. McEwan's research is not isolated. Whitaker (2012) details 18 things that matter most, each one with a substantial number of sub-categories, Watson (2005) describes 21 practices and Cotton (2003) explains 26 behaviours, and so on. A 'one size fits all' approach simply does not work when explaining effective leaders in schools. Typically the research has produced findings like those of Cotton (2003), McEwan (2003), Watson (2005) and Whitaker (2012), for example, where the outcome of these studies has been to produce a set of expectations only Superman can attain. Drysdale et al. (2014) introduced the Superman metaphor:

> An individual with the capacity to step in and save the day, he is the opposite of a social movement for change; instead he is the ultimate rugged individual, standing tall with cape flying, fists on hips, wearing the confident half-smile of a job well done. No problem is very complex for Superman – he arrives out of nowhere, quickly disposes of the fiercest of obstacles, and leaves with the unfailing gratitude of the people. (p. 793)

The findings from the literature reflect the way the research has been conducted; the scope is too wide. I had identified more than 50 qualities and practices from the review of the literature that the effective principal is expected to master. This research will concentrate on independent school principals in Australia

and what they think effectiveness is and then what they do every day that matters most and what is worth focusing on, in their context.

2.14. Summary

As Doherty (2008b) concluded, there has been little case study research carried out to date into the leadership practices in independent, non-Catholic schools in Victoria, Australia. This is the case across all of Australia. This research has the capacity to contribute, in a significant way, to the knowledge and understanding of contemporary leadership within independent schools in Australia. The findings from this research have the potential to encourage and support further investigations into successful school principal leadership within local and international independent school communities, and to assist in the preparation and development of aspiring principals.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present, explain and justify the methodology used in the study. The primary objective in employing the chosen research methodology, mixed methods using a pragmatic philosophy, was to investigate how principals in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia enact their leadership, what they value, and how they perceive being effective in their context.

A large school is determined to be a school with an enrolment of more than 500 students and more than 50 employees. A more detailed justification of large is provided in Section 3.6.2.

The findings from Phase 1, the quantitative phase, of the mixed methods methodology using an online questionnaire provided a general picture of the research problem to inform the qualitative research, Phase 2, the multiple case study. A major component of the mixed methods approach was the qualitative research, which inquired into the realities of four independent school principals in multiple case study research. I conducted the case study part of the research in the principals' schools. Narrative techniques (Pepper & Wildy, 2009) were used to give voice to the principals. In this inquiry, I took a pragmatic approach (D. Morgan, 2014) to the research in order to gather in-depth understandings of principals' leadership behaviours, values and practices and their philosophical motives for such behaviour. I held to the perception that principals in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia have complex and demanding roles. The research explored this phenomenon in depth.

3.2. Position of the Researcher

Creswell (2013) claims whether we are aware of it or not, we always bring certain beliefs and philosophical assumptions to our research. I am an independent school principal of 19 years in two large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in two states; the type of school that was the subject of this research. I was searching for ways to develop my leadership capacity and be more effective in my role. Rather

than continue to pursue further professional learning in the same way as I had done previously, I decided that a Research Degree by Thesis was the way to gain deeper and further insights into the field of leadership in the independent school setting in Australia. There is limited research and study attributed to this context in this country, and internationally.

I have held various positions within the networks of professional communities that support the leadership development and growth of independent school principals. Faced with finding a way of contributing more profoundly to the capacity and learning of principals in these schools, I decided to call on the experience, wisdom and understandings of colleagues to create a framework for principal leadership in large independent schools in Australia, and provide rich lessons to the broader set of leaders in this type of school, about what works, in practice. My career-long experiences generated views about the phenomena studied, the research questions asked, and how data were gathered. These views have been formed over a career exclusively in autonomous, independent schools and spanning more than 35 years. These views have been shaped over that time by learning activities, including pre-service teacher training, reading journal articles and books, the advice provided by colleagues, the professional networks, and conference and meeting activities. These beliefs are deeply anchored in my training and development and reinforced by the scholarly community in which I work (Creswell, 2013). Byrne (2001) argues that qualitative research assumes the researcher is an integral part of the research process. It was this personal biography that was the reason for choosing the research topic and how the research was conducted; my personal and professional perspectives as an independent school principal played a part in the approach taken to this study and the process through which it was undertaken.

3.3. Mixed Methods Research

3.3.1. Pragmatism and mixed methods.

Mixed Methods Research emerged in the late seventies and was the third major research paradigm, along with qualitative and quantitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007; Midgley, Trimmer, & Davies, 2013). Mixed methods is a procedure for collecting, analysing, and aligning

both quantitative and qualitative data at some stage of the research process within a single study for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the research problem (Ivankova et al., 2006).

> The rationale for mixing both kinds of data within one study is grounded in the fact that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods are sufficient, by themselves, to capture the trends and details of a situation. When used in combination, quantitative and qualitative methods complement each other and allow for a more robust analysis, taking advantage of the strengths of each. (p. 3)

In this research, the mixed methods approach combined quantitative and qualitative methodologies on the basis of pragmatism (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) grounded in the researcher's belief that neither quantitative nor qualitative methods would be sufficient, by themselves, to capture the insights and perspectives of independent school principals. Pragmatism is generally regarded as the philosophical partner for mixed methods research (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Feilzer, 2010; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

> Pragmatism, when regarded as an alternative paradigm, sidesteps the contentious issues of truth and reality, accepts, philosophically, that there are singular and multiple realities that are open to empirical inquiry and orients itself toward solving practical problems in the real world. In that sense, pragmatism allows the researcher to be free of mental and practical constraints imposed by the forced choice dichotomy between postpositivism and constructivism and researchers do not have to be the prisoner of a particular [research] method or technique. (Feilzer, 2010, p. 8)

When used in combination, the quantitative and qualitative methods complemented each other and allowed for a more robust analysis, and deeper explanation, taking advantage of the strengths of each. When compared with a single method, the domain of inquiry is less likely to be constrained by the method itself (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Because principals were the subjects of the research, and they brought different knowledge, understandings and experiences, it was a good choice to use mixed methods, rather than quantitative or qualitative methods alone (Ivankova et al., 2006).

3.3.2. Explanatory sequential design.

Within the many designs that constitute mixed methods, the explanatory sequential design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) was used for this research. In this design, I first collected and analysed the quantitative data. Secondly, the qualitative data were then collected and analysed, helping to explain, and elaborate on, the quantitative results obtained in the first phase. The second phase which was qualitative, built on the first, quantitative, phase. Ivankova et al. (2006), Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), and Creswell (2013) found application in both social and behavioural sciences research for this design due to its straightforward nature. It was relatively straightforward to implement because the steps fell into clear separate stages and provided opportunities to explore the quantitative results in much more detail. Table 3.1 outlines how this method was used in this research. The structure of the table was adapted from Ivankova et al. (2006).

3.3.3. The rationale for the use of mixed methods in this study.

Mixed methods were used after the review of the literature found this to be one of the most appropriate for studying this phenomenon. In this design, qualitative data collected and analysed in the second phase, refined, explained and expanded on the claims made in the quantitative data phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) enabling the development of a deep and broad understanding of what makes an independent school principal effective in their context. Using qualitative methods generated broader perspectives and insights than would have been possible using quantitative methods alone. The quantitative phase of the mixed methods found what principals in large, autonomous, P-12 independent schools believed was required to lead their schools effectively. The qualitative phase developed a complete picture of the leadership required, after an in-depth examination of the work of four case study principals.

This research paralleled the theoretical framework employed by Doherty (2008b); I did not set out to prove hypotheses from any one or to test a collection of educational leadership theories. Instead, the real-life experiences of principals in independent schools and the complexities of their role were more relevant to this research than trying to fit principals to pre-determined categories or descriptions of leadership. I wanted to know what works, from the perspectives of principals leading in these schools.

Table 3.1

Sequential Explanatory Design for this Research

Phases		Procedure	Outcome
Phase One	Quantitative data collection	An on-line questionnaire using SurveyMonkey software was sent to 278 principals, 72 responded	Demographic and numeric data.
	Quantitative data analysis	Analysis using the software provided by SurveyMonkey and using Office 365, Excel	General perspectives from principals about the leadership required
		Analytical tools used were tables, graphs, and simple statistical measures	Themes were developed and formed the basis of the case study interviews in the next phase
	Linking quantitative and qualitative phases	Purposefully selecting principals from the sample	Selection of four cases
		Developing protocols for the case study interview and observation schedule	Protocols developed for multiple case study work
Phase Two	Qualitative data collection – multiple case study (Yin, 2009)	Individual in-depth interviews with the four case study principals	Interview transcripts
		Documents collected and observations made to describe the context	Description of context
	Qualitative data analysis	Thematic analysis	Categories and themes
		Within-case and cross-case theme development	In-depth perspectives and insights obtained

(Structure adapted from Ivankova et al., 2006)

3.3.4. The trustworthiness of mixed methods.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) claim that trustworthiness is now closely linked to validity in qualitative research. In mixed methods research, the overall study quality or trustworthiness can be enhanced by using strategies that address potential issues in data collection, data analysis, and the interpretations that might compromise the integration of the quantitative and qualitative results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Or, as Somekh and Lewin (2011) claim, the research has "investigated and demonstrated what it set out to investigate" (p. 330), that is, the methods and results have addressed the research questions. The concept of trustworthiness in qualitative research design relates to the degree of confidence established in the study's theoretical framework and its data collection and analysis processes (Adcock, 2015). It is the concept of trustworthiness that differentiates qualitative research from storytelling (Williams & Morrow, 2009). Since this mixed methods research involved both quantitative and qualitative approaches, trustworthiness in all areas of the study, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation, were addressed. Trustworthiness concerns as they related to specific phases of this research are discussed separately in the relevant Sections 3.6 and 3.7. General techniques used to address trustworthiness concerns in mixed methods and how they were addressed in this study are shown in Table 3.2. They have been adapted from Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007).

Table 3.2

General Strategies to Address Trustworthiness in Mixed Methods Research and this Research

Strategy	Description
Multiple data collection methods	Long and Johnson (2000) advocate employing multiple data sources and data collection methods. In this study, two data collection techniques were used: an online, self-completion questionnaire; and a multiple case study of four principals in their schools.
Drawing appropriate inferences	The researcher consciously drew inferences from the data by relying on the literature review, and the researcher's own experience and knowledge in the field of study.
Status for participants	The researcher assigned value and status to the experiences of the principals; achieved by using narrative in the case study reporting.
Member checking	To ensure that interpretations and conclusions drawn from the study were trustworthy, principals involved in the qualitative research checked, reviewed and suggested changes to narratives. Creswell (2013) advocates member checking is an effective technique for trustworthiness.
Audit trail	An audit of the decision trail (Long & Johnson, 2000) was used; details of all sources of data, collection techniques and experiences, assumptions made, decisions taken, meanings interpreted, and influences on the researcher, were presented in the reporting. The purpose of declaring the decision trail was to allow others to decide on the worth of the study by following the trail taken and comparing it with their conclusions made from the same information.
Trust with case study participants	"Trust" Creswell (2013, p. 250) was built with the participants; this feature had been developed by the researcher as a colleague of the case study principals. Trust and confidence were established through mutually beneficial and respectful relationships.
Intramethod and intermethod mixing	Intramethod and intermethod mixing (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003) have been used. Intramethod mixing occurred with the use of closed and open-ended questions in the questionnaire. Intermethod mixing occurred with the use of questionnaires, case study interviews, observations and document collection. Mixing was used to corroborate findings.
Generalising findings	Appropriate inferences were drawn from the data applied to the characteristics of participants in the research; principals of large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. Claims about the reliability of the research were restricted to this sample of principals, and not generalised to principals in other settings.

(Adapted from Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007)

3.4. Research Questions

The phenomenon studied in this thesis was the leadership enacted by principals leading large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. This study draws on the perspectives, experiences, and philosophies of the principals to explain what it takes to be effective in their context, independent schools in Australia. The central research question was – What constitutes effective principal leadership in large, autonomous, P-12, independent schools in Australia?

The following **sub-questions** further direct this central question into areas for inquiry.

1. How do principals leading large independent schools in Australia view effectiveness?
2. How do these principals describe effectiveness?
3. How do they conceptualise their role?
4. What relevant understandings of leadership apply?

The research questions formed the basis of the mixed methods research. The purpose of the study was to capture from this group of principals what it means to be effective as a principal in the schools they lead. The principals involved in the study provided meaning and understandings of what constitutes effective leadership in their school settings. A framework for the leadership required in these types of schools was developed. Table 3.3 shows how the research questions were addressed in the three phases of the research.

Table 3.3

Research Questions

Questions	Phase 1 Quantitative – questionnaire	Phase 2 Qualitative – Multiple case study	Chapter 6 – discussion of findings
How do principals leading large independent schools in Australia view effectiveness?	√	√	√
How do these principals describe effectiveness?		√	√
How do they conceptualise their role?	√	√	√
What relevant understandings of leadership apply?	√	√	√

3.5. Research Design

This inquiry used sequential explanatory research design (see Table 3.1) and did not seek concrete answers or proof, but principals' subjective, human perspectives and their personal experiences of what constitutes effective leadership. The mixed methods approach had two distinct and sequentially related phases are:

Phase 1   Quantitative methods were used involving an on-line, self-completion Questionnaire.

Phase 2   Case study methods were used with narrative reporting techniques to enable the participant's voices to be heard.

3.6. Phase One: Quantitative Phase - Questionnaire

3.6.1. Design.

This phase of the research used an online, self-completion questionnaire with the research questions used to inform the design. Questionnaires provide an effective way of gathering structured and unstructured data from respondents in a standardised way, through self-completion (Somekh & Lewin, 2011). The benefit of using a questionnaire for this research was that it identified from a sample of principals, general trends in attitudes, opinions, behaviours and characteristics of principals leading large, autonomous, P-12 independent schools across Australia. The questionnaire was constructed using principles advanced by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003), Carmody (2009), and Pointing (2005). The general principles used in this research were:

1. Design
   a. Items were purposefully designed to match the research objectives (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 303).
   b. The researcher's understanding of the participants' work was used to develop the items (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003, p. 303).
   c. Questions were designed using the research questions, the findings from the literature review, and the researcher's own insights.
2. Pre-test the questionnaire
   a. The questionnaire was pre-tested on recently retired principals of large, independent schools to identify adjustments and modifications that needed to be made to the questionnaire (Pointing, 2005).
   b. Pilot testing with three current independent school principals was used to test the technical aspects of the questionnaire (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).
3. Mode of questionnaire
   a. An online and self-completion questionnaire.
   b. The software used was available at surveymonkey.net.

4. Structure & length
   a. The requirements for the participants were easy to understand and follow.
   b. The questionnaire did not take more than 20 minutes to complete (Pointing, 2005).
5. Question items (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003)
   a. Natural and familiar language was used, common to the usual discourse about school leadership.
   b. There was no use of leading, loaded, or double negative questions.
   c. The items were simple and clear.
   d. Mutually exclusive and exhaustive response categories were used (p. 303).

The questionnaire was designed by me with the assistance of the Statistical Consulting Unit of the University of Southern Queensland (USQ). A senior academic in this unit assisted with the construct validity of the instrument by reviewing the questionnaire at several stages of its development; providing feedback about the research design and the appropriateness of items; and ensuring the instrument had been designed for its intended purpose. I used free software (SurveyMonkey, 2020) to administer and provide an initial analysis of the questionnaire. Office 365, Excel, was also used for the analysis.

Each respondent was provided with the same set of questions, and the same analytic method was used. This ensured that any similarities and differences in responses to questions could be interpreted as reflecting individual respondent's different views, rather than being a fault of the questionnaire design. Principals were asked to identify themselves because a group of principals from the larger sample was chosen for the case study work in the next phase of the research. The questionnaire had four parts.

Part A. Personal, school and demographic data

Items were included for the respondents to provide personal, school and demographic information. Data were collected to confirm that the respondent principal met the criteria to be included in the research; if they did not, then they did not proceed with the completion of the questionnaire. They were

asked to confirm that their school was *independent.* Definitions for independent and autonomous were provided in Section 1.4.

The respondent principals confirmed that they were responsible for a P-12 school (or its equivalent) and provided demographic detail about total student enrolment; the number of staff; total recurrent income; and capital expenditure (over the previous five years). This allowed me to verify that the schools were large organisations.

Part B. Qualities and attributes

The next part of the questionnaire used closed and open items to seek perspectives about the qualities/values of school principals that enable them to lead their schools effectively. I produced a list of 12 qualities and values from the review of the literature and used these to construct the questionnaire. Twelve was deemed manageable considering the task; any more than this would have made the task unwieldy. Principals were asked to re-order the list of qualities/values regarding their perceived relative importance for the leadership provided by a principal in an independent school in Australia. There was a component of this part of the questionnaire that asked the participants to add to the list if they felt any important qualities/values were missing from the list of 12 presented. Some of the qualities/values that were put to respondents were:

- have a strong connection with the ethos and culture of the school they lead;
- have a passionate belief in the significance of what they do; and
- place a high value on collaboration and value the contributions that others can make to the school.

Part C. Practices and strategies

Part C was like Part B, except for examining practices and strategies, rather than values and beliefs, of effective school principals. Some of the practices/strategies presented to the respondents were:

- is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment;

- ensures they are visible and approachable; they make themselves available; and
- ensures quality financial management is in place, seeking and allocating fiscal resources appropriately.

Part D. Expectations and responsibilities

This part considered the expectations and responsibilities that are held for principals by their boards and school communities. These items were developed after reviewing the prospectuses used by school boards to appoint independent school principals. The prospectuses reviewed were the four discussed in detail on p. 20 in 2.4. They were chosen because these were four prospectuses that I had readily available at the time of the literature review and they fulfilled the criteria for a large, P-12, autonomous, independent school. The prospectuses establish the attributes principals are expected to have, and the responsibilities for which principals are held accountable in their roles. A set of 14 expectations was put to the research group of principals who rated their appropriateness to the role of an independent school principal. An open-ended item was included, where participants added any essential expectations missing from the list. Some of the expectations and responsibilities put to the principals were:

- nurture and cultivate the religious, spiritual or values-laden dimension of the school;
- engage with the school board in developing, implementing and monitoring the mission and vision for the school; and
- grow a sustainable enrolment base and ensuring the future viability of the school.

5. This final part had principals focus more intently on the three most important, and the three least important expectations. This item was included because from my own experience and insights, I considered all the expectations appropriate. Given this, the inclusion of this item allowed the participant to focus on the three most important and least important, adding weight to the findings. The full questionnaire can be found in Appendix A.

Pre-testing of the questionnaire was carried out using three recently retired principals who had led large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia.

Each one was invited to advise me if they had any methodological issue, or any technical or process issues, which would prevent the participants from completing the questionnaire as designed. They confirmed that the questionnaire could be completed and advised no changes were needed.

3.6.2. Selection of participants.

I was seeking principals who led large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. AHISA, with over 400 members, is the professional association catering for autonomous school principals in independent schools in Australia. The Chief Executive Officer of AHISA provided me with a database of members. This database, readily available to all member principals, contains data that are publicly available, including relevant details about the principal and his/her school: principal's name and work contact details; school name; web address; location; religious affiliation; type; day/boarding; year levels; year founded; SES; and enrolment numbers. The *My School* website https://www.myschool.edu.au/; a resource for parents, educators and the community to receive information about each of Australia's over 9,500 schools and campuses, was used to obtain further school data. Those data werethe number of staff employed, financial data, recurrent income, and capital expenditure.

Settling on an appropriate definition for *large* was interesting, albeit a widely used term, it has quite different conceptions depending upon the context. I looked to the median (or average) size of an independent school in Australia to resolve this. The average size of an independent school in Australia is 528 students (ISCA, 2019b). Given I readily accept that schools are businesses, the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) was sourced to define large. ASIC does not offer a definition for *large business*. I used the definition for a *small business* to set the minimum criteria for which I could evaluate if a school was large. A small business (ASIC, 2017b) is one with fewer than 50 employees. The result of this line of inquiry was to settle on a definition of large for the quantitative research to be a school with (i) enrolments of more than 500 students; and (ii) at least 50 employees. The following criteria were used to include principals in the quantitative phase of the research.

1. A non-government, autonomous, independent school

2. Enrolments across P-12 (or equivalent depending upon the state)

3. Total enrolments to exceed 500

4. Full-time equivalent staff exceeds 50

Using the data from the two sources, I identified 278 principals of independent schools in Australia that met the criteria for inclusion; they were all invited to participate in the research.

3.6.3. Data collection.

A blind group email message was sent to all principals in advance of the release of the questionnaire to introduce principals to the research, including a brief case for why a principal should participate, advising them that they would be completing an online questionnaire, and indicating the expected time commitment. A few days later, a formal personal invitation was sent to individual principals by email. The weblink to the questionnaire was included and activating the link took the participant to the SurveyMonkey website where the questionnaire was completed. A small number of principals identified they were ineligible to participate because they did not meet all criteria for inclusion. For example, one principal identified that their school was a secondary school only, and not P-12. Another advised that they were a system school, not an autonomous, independent school, and therefore did not complete the questionnaire.

Approximately two weeks later, a reminder email was sent to principals who had not responded to the questionnaire to date. This email encouraged recipients to be part of the research, sharing that principals who completed the questionnaire found it to take 10-15 minutes to complete, providing the hyperlink again, and advising how many heads had completed the questionnaire to that point. When a principal completed the questionnaire, a follow-up email to personally thank him/her was sent. At the end of this process, 72 responses were received, a 27% participation rate. Fryrear (2015) considers this to be a reasonable response rate, stating an average response rate for external surveys is usually between 10-15%. Three techniques were used to ensure an acceptable participation rate:

1. keeping the questionnaire completion time to a reasonable length, estimated to be about 15 minutes;

2. providing reasons why it would be valuable for the principals to respond; and

3. sending reminders.

3.6.4. Data analysis.

Structured closed questions were the primary type of item, and they were analysed using Microsoft Office 365 excel software and the SurveyMonkey data analysis tools. The main analytical tools used to present the data and analyse the results were descriptions, tables, and charts. Tables can be used to present data in easy to understand formats (Somekh & Lewin, 2011). Charts presented the data visually and highlighted patterns and issues that were drawn out in the interpretation of the data. Data collected from the open-ended items were in the form of verbatim comments. Verbatim comments were presented exactly as they were provided, with the analysis restricted to grouping similar comments together. Analysing the quantitative phase of this mixed methods research achieved the following:

1. verification - the principals included in the questionnaire lead and manage large schools;

2. identification - the principals identified the qualities/values, and practices/strategies they considered to be most important to the effectiveness of the independent school principal;

3. confirmation - the participants indicated that the expectations held by their school boards were appropriate to their role as an independent school principal; and

4. analysis - a number of distinct strands of effective principal leadership in independent schools were identified by the research group of principals as being the most important in their context.

3.6.5. Validity of measurement.

According to Winter (2000), there are two components of validity in quantitative research: (i) whether the measurement instruments used are accurate; and (ii) whether they measure what they are intended to measure. In this phase of the mixed methods research, validity was addressed by inviting participants for the self-

completion questionnaire from the entire population of more than 400 independent schools who met the criteria for inclusion. From the 400, there were more than 130 principals who did not meet the criteria to be included; they did not lead large, P-12 independent schools. To further address the validity concerns, the same questionnaire instrument was used for all participant principals. In addition, the questionnaire was both pre and pilot tested to address internal construct validity.

The criteria to be met for a principal to be included in the research were discussed in Section 3.6.2. The criteria P-12 and independent, are objective terms and readily justified. The criteria used for the concepts large and autonomous need to be valid. To ensure these measures were valid, I turned to three authorities to establish the measures for these concepts (i) the Independent Schools Council of Australia (ISCA); (ii) the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC); and (iii) the Association of Heads of Independent Schools in Australia (AHISA).

3.6.6. Transition to the next phase.

The questionnaire findings provided a general picture of the research problem to inform the qualitative research, the multiple case study. The findings from the questionnaire analysis were presented to the case study principals who were called to discuss them from their own context and experience. The case study research probed more deeply individual principal's views and beliefs about leadership in independent schools, and how they approached principal leadership in their context. An interview protocol and questions for the case study interviews can be found in Tables 3.6 and 3.7. These were designed using the findings from the quantitative analysis which were presented and analysed in Chapter Four.

3.7. Phase 2 Qualitative Phase – Multiple Case Study

3.7.1. Design.

According to Bryman, Stephens, and Campo (1996, p. 355), "multiple case study design makes a distinctive contribution to the elucidation of context", and in this research, the context was central to the phenomenon being studied. This design allowed for comparisons between the principals as a means of describing the leadership enacted by principals due to their different school and leadership contexts and brought to light the reasons and explanations for their leadership. I used one-on-

one interviewing of the principals as the primary technique, with observations and document analysis (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975) used to describe the context for each case study. Conger (1998) claims that a multiple case study provided distinct advantages over other methods due to:

1. more opportunities to explore leadership phenomena in significant depth;
2. the flexibility to discern and detect unexpected phenomena during the research;
3. the ability to investigate processes more effectively;
4. greater chances to explore and to be sensitive to contextual factors; and
5. more effective means to investigate symbolic dimensions. (p. 111)

Conger (1998) describes qualitative research as the methodology of choice for topics as contextually rich as leadership; claiming that quantitative methods on their own are unable to portray the richness of the leadership phenomena and that qualitative methods are better suited to uncovering the multi-dimensional and dynamic nature of leadership. Bryman et al. (1996) make a similar case arguing that qualitative research offers "advantages when the perspectives and viewpoints of those being studied are important to the research and when sensitivity to context is a factor" (p. 353). The qualitative component of the mixed methods study involved engaging with four independent school principals where the context was different for each of the principals. The perspectives and understandings of independent school principals in Australia were sought to construct meaning around what it is to be effective in their context. In this setting, the qualitative research component involved inquiry that examined the principals' working lives, their experiences and behaviours, and the stories and meanings that a group of principals ascribe to them. This approach enabled me to gain a better understanding of the complexity of leadership in large independent schools. It allowed me to investigate how a small group of principals interpret and make sense of their experiences.

The case study research identified and described how a group of four principals understood their values and beliefs, perceived their roles, viewed effectiveness in their context, and managed the demands of the role, using description, interpretation and explanation. The case study principals told their leadership stories, within a scaffold of what constitutes effectiveness, they responded to the general inquiry, "what is going on here?" (Somekh & Lewin, 2011, p. 53). The

interviews were a conversation between the case study principal and me, where thoughts and ideas were exchanged, questions were asked and answered, and information and perspectives shared freely. Principals reflected on the findings from the quantitative analysis and provided feedback from their context. Narrative description was used to tell the principal's own stories, their individual perspectives, and to capture the principal's theories and beliefs in a holistic way. The research developed a "parsing experience so that practitioners can examine and learn from it" (Doherty, 2002b, p. 10). Narrative accounts offer a "powerful research strategy in educational leadership studies. They permit rich insights into the experiences of participants and are aligned with qualitatively oriented educational research" (Pepper & Wildy, 2009, p. 18).

As the case study principals and I walked around their schools and talked about their work, observation notes were made, and these were used to describe the contextual factors operating in the school and to build a profile of the principal. Documents were collected during the case study visits and subsequent to the visit. The documents were reviewed to ensure that I represented the context for each case study properly. For example, reviewing prospectus documents and the website enabled a more complete picture of the school's features and attributes to be described. Samples of the interview questions that guided the case study interview have been included here for illustrative purposes. These examples were developed from the analysis of the data from the online questionnaire.

This statement introduced the questions – Here is the final ranked set of qualities/values as perceived by the 72 principals who took part in the online questionnaire; take a moment to reflect on these…..

1. What three do **you** believe are the most important, from your own perspective?
2. Why do you think these are the most important?
3. How is each one of these values enacted in your role? What do you do to model or demonstrate these values?

A set of interview questions was used to unpack the findings from the online questionnaire as they related to the expectations held for principals by their local school boards. The full set of interview questions allowed for a discussion of the responsibilities that principals assumed were a part of their role.

The questionnaire findings confirmed that the list of expectations held for principals by boards through the explicit statements in recruitment prospectuses is appropriate.

1. How do you respond to this set? What do you feel about the expectations and responsibilities?
2. If you were asked by an aspiring principal, 'how would you describe the role of an independent school principal' and had to answer that question in one or two sentences, what would you say?

A set of themes emerged from the questionnaire findings of what effective principalship looks like in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools. The list was provided to the principals prior to the interview so they could reflect on them. The questions probed their responses to the themes of leadership in their context.

1. As you read this list, what are your immediate feelings/impressions?
2. Is it exhaustive? Are there any other aspects of the role that you would like to highlight?
3. Could this list form the foundation of a framework for principalship in independent schools?
4. Are these the major aspects of our role? The major areas of leadership?

A major part of the case study interview was to draw the principal into a discussion about their perceptions of effectiveness in the context of large independent schools in Australia. These questions went to the heart of the research questions.

1. How would you rate your own effectiveness as an independent school principal?
2. What do you believe it takes to be effective in leading large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia?
3. How would you define effectiveness in our context?
4. If you were asked to measure the effectiveness of a colleague, what would be the ruler to measure effectiveness? What criteria would you use to judge if they were effective?

A number of questions called on the principals to discuss their role and to describe any models of leadership, which might apply.

1. How do you conceptualise our role?

2. What are the critical elements of the role of an independent school principal?

3. What models of leadership do you think apply to our context?

The case study interviews were drawn to a close by inviting the principals to reflect on the over-arching research question in this inquiry and to provide any concluding or summary comments/observations that they felt had not been covered in the interview.

(i) What makes an effective leader of large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia?

(ii) Is there anything further you would like to say in response to this question or add to your responses? Any concluding comments or remarks?

3.7.2. Selection of participants.

Principals for the case study research were selected from the principals involved in Phase 1, the quantitative research. For this second phase, I sought principals with significant experience as a principal in independent schools and who lead very large, complex, and multi-faceted organisations. This sampling technique was advocated by Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003, p. 279), "the logic and power of using purposive sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases of study in depth, with an underlying focus on intentionally selecting specific cases that will provide the most information for the questions under study." So, a change in selection criteria was used in phase two; I sought principals who:

- had more than 15 years of experience as a principal;
- had been a principal in at least two independent schools;
- had been the principal in the current school for at least five years;
- led complex organisations with multiple sub-schools;
- led schools with an enrolment of more than 1,000 pupils; and
- led schools with more than 100 staff.

I considered an enrolment of 1,000 students as the benchmark for very large. This was based on the fact that there only 20% of the 1,078 independent schools in Australia that have an enrolment of more than 1,000 students (ISCA, 2019b). Principals were purposefully selected to include two male and two female principals, two co-educational schools, one single sex boys school and one single sex girls

school, capital city and provincial, and from three eastern states. The principals chosen were known to me through membership of AHISA. A brief biography of each case study principal is provided in Table 3.4. Anonymity was protected by using pseudonyms for the principal and the principal's school.

3.7.3. Data collection.

Emails were sent to the four principals to invite them to be involved in the qualitative research, and it was explained that involvement would mean a two-day visit to their school to complete the case study.

The case study inquiry involved observations of the principal in their school setting; personal interviews; and informal, ongoing discussion and dialogue. Observations involved noting the activities of the principal, the interactions that occurred, and the conversations they had with staff and students. These observations were incorporated into the narratives as my reflections.

The semi-structured interview protocol used open-ended and general questions, focused on understanding the central phenomenon in the study, what constitutes effective principal leadership in large, autonomous, P-12, independent schools in Australia. Voice Record Pro for iPhone was used to sound record the interviews. This allowed me to engage more naturally in the interview without being distracted, taking notes and manually recording the discussion. Having a digital recording of the interviews also allowed me to more accurately report the findings. Although I was well planned and organised for each visit, the semi-structured nature of the interviews allowed interviewees to share their perspectives in-depth and without being restricted (Fade & Swift, 2011). The principals recounted their career experiences reflecting on their qualities and practices, their role, the expectations held for them, the multi-facets of the school's operations, and their perspectives on effectiveness.

During the site visits, documents were collected and provided by each participant. These were publicly available documents such as prospectuses, annual reports, annual magazines, newspaper articles, and occasional speeches. The reason for using documents was to gather additional information that could be used to describe the context. Observations were faithfully noted during the case study visits and written up on the same day of the observations, to ensure they were reliable.

Table 3.4

Case Study Participant Principals

Name	School	Brief Profile
Karleen	Centenary	Capital city, inner-city, girls' day and boarding school, with an enrolment of more than 2,100 students and more than 350 employees. Karleen has over 19 years of experience as a principal. Previous principalship at a large, capital city, girls' day and boarding school in another state.
Allan	Founders	Capital city, inner-city, boys' day and boarding school, with an enrolment of more than 2,000 students and more than 360 employees. Allan has over 24 years of experience as a Principal. Previous principalships at a large, capital city, co-educational, day school; and a large, regional, co-educational, day school, in two states.
Karen	Waterview	Capital city suburban co-educational day school with an enrolment of more than 1,650 students and more than 200 employees. Karen has over 17 years of experience as a Principal. Previous principalship at a large, capital city, girls' day school.
Adam	Regional	Regional co-educational day school with an enrolment of more than 1,300 students and more than 150 employees. Adam has over 15 years of experience as a Principal. Previous principalship at a large, capital city, co-educational, day school in another state.

Observations were made to capture information about the context of the case study. They were recorded in a word document. Creswell's (2013) observational protocol (p. 169), and interview protocol (p. 165) formed the basis for the protocols used in the case study work. The interview protocol used is included at Table 3.5, and the observational protocol at Table 3.6.

Table 3.5

Case Study Interview Protocol

Date

Time

Place

Interviewer

Interviewee

Opening statement/brief description of project.

- *Investigator motive*
- *Purpose of study*
- *Protection of respondents*
- *Confidentiality*
- *Willingness to continue to participate*
- *Use of data*
- *Access to final report*
- *Permission to audio tape record the interview*

Statement of the research questions –

What makes an effective leader of large, autonomous, P-12, independent schools in Australia?

1. How do principals running larger independent schools in Australia define effectiveness?
2. How do these principals measure effectiveness in their context?
3. What can be conceptualised as their role?
4. What models of leadership emerge relevant to their context?

General research questions

1. What do you believe it takes to be effective in leading large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia?
2. How would you define effectiveness in our context?
3. If you were asked to measure the effectiveness of a colleague, what would be the ruler to measure effectiveness? What criteria would you use to judge if they were effective?

4. How do you conceptualise our role? What are the critical elements of the role of an independent school principal?

5. What models of leadership do you think apply to our context?

Specific questions – derived from the findings of the questionnaire

From the list of qualities and values (characteristics, traits or attributes) – *hand a copy of the final ranked set to the participant, prior to asking the question*

In front of you, you have the final ranked set of qualities/values as perceived by the 72 principals who took part in the on-line questionnaire; take a moment to reflect on these…..

6. What three do you believe are the most important, from your own perspective?

7. Why do you think these are the most important?

8. How is this value enacted in your role? What do you do to model or demonstrate this value?

Similarly, for the practices/ strategies………...

9. What three do you believe are the most important, from your own perspective?

10. Why do you think these are the most important?

11. How is this practice enacted in your role? What are you doing when you are employing this practice/strategy?

The questionnaire findings confirmed that the list of expectations held for principals by boards through the explicit statements in recruitment prospectuses is appropriate. There was really no dissension or objection at all. Here is the list of expectations/responsibilities…

12. How do you respond to this set? What do you feel about the expectations and responsibilities?

13. If you were asked by an aspiring principal, 'how would you describe the role of an independent school' and had to answer that question in one or two sentences, what would you say?

The principals who participated in the questionnaire did not rank some aspects of the role, nearly as importantly as others. The differences were significant. Four areas were evident.

(1) instructional leadership

(2) confident communicator

(3) regularly checking the pulse of the school, and

(4) protecting the school's heritage

14. Why do you think these particular aspects did not rate as highly? What is your view about these in the context of leadership in our schools?

The following themes have emerged from the questionnaire findings about what effective principalship looks like in our schools. *Provide the list to the participant…..*

15. As you read this list, what are your immediate feelings/impressions?

16. Is it exhaustive? Are there any other aspects of the role that you would like to highlight?

17. Could this list form the foundation of a framework for principalship in independent schools? Are these the major aspects of our role? The major areas of leadership?

A concluding question –

18. How would you rate your own effectiveness as an independent school principal? Unpack that rating for me, explain why you gave yourself that rating?

Close the interview and thanks

Note. Case study interview protocol adapted from Creswell (2013, p. 165)

Adapted from Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches, Third Edition, p. 165, by Creswell, J. 2013. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications. Copyright 2013 by Copyright Holder John Creswell.

Table 3.6

Case Study Observation Protocol

The researcher takes field notes on the behaviour and activities of individuals at the research site

Date

Time

Length of activity

Site

Participants

Research sub-questions
1. How do principals running larger independent schools in Australia define effectiveness?
2. How do these principals measure effectiveness in their context?
3. What can be conceptualised as their role?
4. What models of leadership emerge relevant to their context?

Descriptive notes	Reflective notes
Physical setting: visual layout	[Reflective comments: questions to self, observations of nonverbal behaviour, my interpretations]
Description of participants Description of activities Description of individuals engaged in activity Sequence of activity over time Interactions Unplanned events Participants comments: expressed in quotes	[Reflective comments: questions to self, observations of nonverbal behaviour, my interpretations]
[The researcher's observation of what seems to be occurring]	

Note. Case study observation protocol adapted from Creswell (2013, p. 169)

Adapted from Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches, Third Edition, p. 169, by Creswell, J. 2013. Thousand Oaks, CA. Sage Publications. Copyright 2013 by Copyright Holder John Creswell.

3.8. Data Analysis

A thematic style of analysis was used because it enabled me to identify, analyse, describe and report themes in individual principal's experiences, an approach advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Fade and Swift (2011). I organised and described the complete data set from the interviews in detail; interpreted and added meaning to the themes that emerged from individual cases and across the cases. The data and evolving findings were in a continual process of comparison throughout both the data collection and analysis phases (Conger, 1998). The process of identifying recurrent themes and strands of leadership began as early as the quantitative phase. Throughout the qualitative analysis, I reviewed and modified themes as the case study principals shared their perspectives and ideas about leadership. Their added perspectives deepened the understanding of leadership in these contexts and forced changes and adjustments to be made to the emerging themes. As the narratives were being written, and analysed, recurrent themes were being characterised and categorised (Pepper & Wildy, 2009) and the shared concepts were presented using consistent and familiar language. There were two distinct stages in the analysis of data. The first stage was the within-case analysis, and the second stage was the cross-case analysis.

Stage 1: Within-case analysis

Within stage 1 there were four separate steps to the analysis: (1) preparing and organising the data; (2) reporting the data using narratives; (3) reducing the data from each narrative to themes; and (4) categorising the themes. Themes that emerged from phase one, the quantitative research, were presented to the case study principals as a starting point for the conversation that occurred in the case study interviews. These themes were modified and developed as the within-case analysis progressed.

1. Preparing and organising the data

   Transcribing the voice recordings made during each case study visit was the first step. These were transcribed verbatim; I did not attempt to summarise or manipulate the data, merely transcribing the data that were contained in the Voice Pro for iPhone digital files.

2. Reporting the data using narratives

The data set from each case study was presented as a narrative, organised under these broad headings:

- Scene setting;
- Values and beliefs;
- Conceptions of the role;
- Perspectives on effectiveness;
- Managing the demands of the role;
- My commentary on the narrative; and
- Themes to emerge from each case.

This step involved taking a segment of the transcript and presenting it in one of the above sections of the narrative.

For example: Here is a quote from a principal made during one of the interviews.

You've got to have high energy levels, and you've got to enjoy what you do, you've got to get a buzz from it otherwise you couldn't sustain the amount of energy and requirements that you need to do the job. I am still invigorated by the role, and I love the role.

Section of the Narrative: *Managing the demands of the role*

3. Reducing the data from each narrative to themes

This step involved re-reading the narratives several times, considering the narrative holistically, and reflecting upon my interpretations. It involved looking for key themes, that summarised what was being described by the case study principals. These key themes were drawn out from the narrative and annotated as themes.

For example: Below is an example of text from a narrative, within the section 'values and beliefs'.

There is a good fit for me, here at Founders. Boards have to get this right and do their homework when choosing the most suitable applicant. If this isn't achieved, then your leadership is shot right from the start.

Theme: The board played a crucial role in establishing the footing for success by selecting the right person for the job.

4. Categorising the themes

Themes were collated and distilled, with similar themes combined to form discrete categories.

For example: Below is an example of a theme assigned to a particular category. The board played a crucial role in establishing the foundation for success by selecting the right person for the job.

Category: Values and beliefs.

Stage 2: Cross-case analysis

I used a thematic cross-case analysis (Creswell, 2013) which involved two steps:

1. scanning the themes to emerge from the four case studies, refining the themes by reflecting on the broader concepts in the data, and identifying the major ideas to emerge from across the cases for the leadership in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia; and

2. abstracting out beyond the major ideas into broader categories (Creswell, 2013). This step involved moving beyond the themes to the broader meaning of the data. In this step of the analysis, meaning was assigned to each category and the findings interpreted within the broader research literature. Direct interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used in this step, linking my interpretation of the data to the more substantial research literature, and isolating the lessons that can be learned. This step involved making meaning of the data and interpreting the data in relation to my personal insights.

For example: Leadership context is one of the categories

Interpretation and meaning of leadership context:

> The foundation for the effectiveness of the principal in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools hinges on the board, making a quality decision about the person they appoint to lead the school. The board's most important role is to appoint and work with the principal. This relationship is crucial to the school's success. Each school is its own community, with a unique context.

3.8.1. Trustworthiness in the qualitative phase of this study.

A general introduction of trustworthiness for the research occurred in Section 3.3.4. Trustworthiness in mixed methods research is, "employing strategies that address potential issues in data collection, data analysis, and the interpretations that might compromise the merging or connecting of the quantitative and qualitative strands of the study and the conclusions drawn from the combination" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 239).

Trustworthiness concerns in the qualitative phase of the research were mitigated in the following ways.

- Collecting descriptive information was done using voice recording software and transcribing interviews verbatim so that any information taken was accurate.
- Observations were faithfully noted during the case study visits and written up on the same day of the observations, to ensure they were reliable.
- Narrative techniques ensured that the voices of the case study principals were faithfully reported and given status.
- Appropriate inferences were drawn from the data by relying on the literature review, my own experience and knowledge in the field of study and assigning value and status to the experiences of the participants.
- Principals involved in the qualitative phase were from the same sample of principals who participated in the quantitative phase.
- The external reliability of the study was enhanced by using four case study sites in a multi-site case study (Pointing, 2005).
- Careful consideration was given to findings and how they were reported compared to the original purpose and intent of the research.

The main strategy used to address trustworthiness concerns in the qualitative phase was member checking (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) which involved case study principals reviewing and commenting on the findings. Case study principals confirmed that the transcription of the case study interviews was accurate and adequately reflected the interviews, and after the draft case study report was developed, principals reviewed their own reports. Case study participants reviewed their individual narrative and checked its accuracy. The principals were presented

with the themes to emerge from their cases, reflected upon them and provided feedback. In the same way, the principals were presented with the themes and concepts to emerge from across the four cases for corroboration.

3.8.2. Trustworthiness of conclusions drawn from the overall study.

In this final phase of the research, the main strategy to address trustworthiness concerns was my conscious focus on not generalising the research findings to other people, places, settings and times. Inferences drawn from the data apply to the characteristics of participants in the research; large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. Claims about the reliability of the research have been restricted to principals who lead large, independent schools in Australia, and have not been generalised to principals in government schools and/or Catholic systemic schools in Australia, or to international settings. The reason why this was not contemplated is that the context in these settings is so different from the settings for this research. There does remain the possibility that others in such settings may be able to find some verisimilitude that helps them to better understand leadership in their own contexts.

3.9. Ethics

This research received Ethics Approval, H16REA200, from the Office of Research, Human Research Ethics Committee, at the University of Southern Queensland (Appendix B). Principals were at liberty to freely choose whether they wanted to be involved in the study, or not. While participants are members of a collegial association that I belong to, the participants are entirely independent and autonomous and act without reference to the association or bound by any by-laws or principles of the association. Each participant was provided with a participant information statement which provided information and understanding of both the proposed research and the implications of participation in the study. Signed written consent to participate in the research was obtained from each principal for the qualitative research.

At all times, respect for the privacy, confidentiality and sensitivities of the principals, and where relevant, of their school communities, was maintained.

Regarding overall reporting of results and publishing, I used pseudonyms for case studies. Personal impressions of participants were not shared, and sensitive information that might cause them reputational harm or social damage was not disclosed. Risks were mitigated by providing copies of reports to participants to ensure they were comfortable with publishing relevant findings. There were no amendments required after this step.

Disruption to the principals and impacts on their professional work were limited to the time required for the participants to complete the one-to-one interviews. During the site visits as part of the case study research, publicly available documents were collected and provided by each participant.

3.10. Limitations

This study was concerned with principal leadership in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. There were 72 principals involved in the quantitative phase and four principals involved in the qualitative phase. This research focused on a comprehensive understanding of principal leadership behaviour in a specific school context and situation. However, the findings should be restricted to principals working within the contexts of the study as principals were from one sector of education in Australia, the independent school sector. Moreover, given context is critical to the effectiveness of those principals, lessons learned ought not to be generalised to other contexts like government and Catholic systemic schools. This research provides a foundation upon which further research on principalship within independent schools could evolve.

3.11. Chapter Conclusion

Mixed methods were chosen as the most appropriate methodology to achieve the research objectives because this methodology allowed me to produce a piece of research that more fully explains effective principal leadership in large, autonomous, P-12, independent schools in Australia, from principals themselves. The perspectives and personal experiences of four principals and what constitutes effective principal leadership in their context is the cornerstone of this research.

The next chapter in this thesis is the representation and analysis of the quantitative research data, the first phase of the mixed methods research. A self-

completion questionnaire was used to obtain general perspectives from principals about effective principal leadership in large, autonomous, P-12, independent schools in Australia. In the questionnaire, participant principals were asked to rate a set of qualities and values, and practices and strategies, that the literature associated with effective principals and they were invited to identify the appropriateness of the expectations held for independent school principals by their boards and school communities.

Chapter Four: Quantitative Data Representation and Analysis

4.1. Introduction

The review of the relevant literature in the field produced an excessive set of qualities, values, practices and strategies associated with how principals enact their leadership. McEwan (2003) identified 10 traits and for each of the 10 traits, a comprehensive set of behaviours, called benchmarks. For example, one of the traits is communicator (McEwan, 2003, p. 19), and for the communicator trait, there is an associated set of 19 behaviours and habits. Whitaker (2012) details 18 things that matter most, each one with a substantial number of sub-categories. Watson (2005) describes 21 practices and Cotton (2003) claims 26 behaviours are associated with effective principals. While there is some overlap, each researcher/author in the field simply adds to the number of attributes and practices the principal is expected to possess and enact, to be effective. I found more than 50 that appear consistently within the literature. Hall et al. (2016) claim there are simply too many theories and approaches concerning the particular skills and strategies of effective school leadership, and attempting to cover each component would prove cumbersome, exhausting, and fruitless.

The self-completion questionnaire used in this research was purposefully designed to see what qualities, values, practices and strategies, were important to the principals of large, autonomous, P-12, independent schools in Australia. What did independent school principals' rate as most important? The questionnaire was in four parts:

Part 1: data were obtained about the school: confirmation of the school's independence; school structure and size; number of staff; and financial data;

Part 2: principals were asked to rate a set of qualities and values, that the literature associated with effective principals;

Part 3: principals were asked to rate a set of practices and strategies, that the literature related to effective principals; and

Part 4: principals were invited to identify how appropriate were the expectations held for independent school principals by their boards and school communities.

4.2. Part 1: Demographic Data

In this part of the questionnaire the respondents identified themselves, their school, and confirmed that their school was a P-12, autonomous, independent school. Further, they provided the following data about their schools: (a) total enrolment in 2015; (b) total number of staff in 2015; (c) total recurrent income in 2015; and (d) total capital expenditure over the five-year period, 2011-2015. The demographic data presented in Figures 4.1 to 4.4 in this section are included to show that the principals who responded lead and manage large organisations. Table 4.1 shows data about the invitations sent to participate in the questionnaire, and the responses received.

Table 4.1

Questionnaire – Response Rate

Invitations/responses	Number
Invitations sent	278
Responses received	72
Did not complete the survey	206
Response rate expressed as a percentage	27%

Note. A response rate of 27% was considered suitable for the purposes of the research (Fryrear, 2015), given that data were obtained from 72 independent school principals.

Part 1 of the questionnaire obtained data about the school size. Figure 4.1 shows the enrolment size for the schools of those principals who responded. Seventy-two principals responded by providing the enrolment numbers in their school. Thirty-one percent of schools involved in the questionnaire have an enrolment greater than 1,500 students and 79% of schools have an enrolment greater than 1,000 students. All schools have more than 500 students.
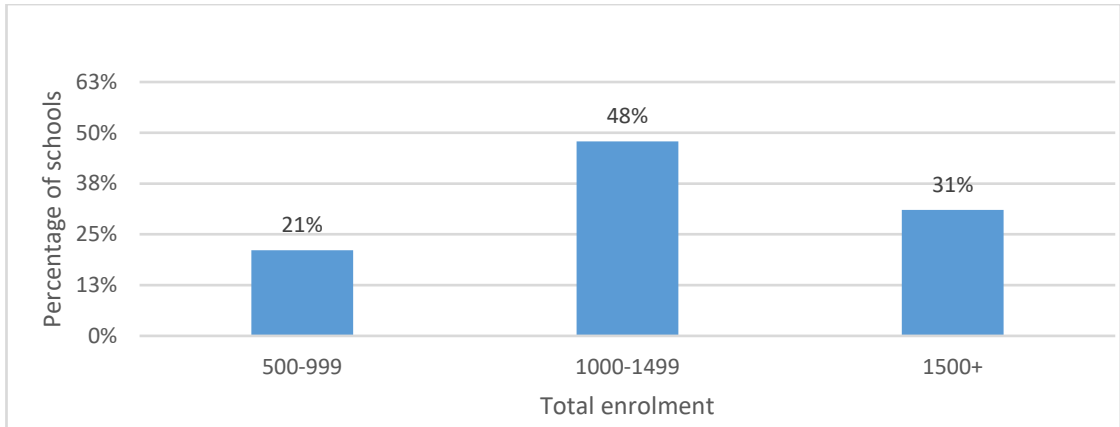
Figure 4.1. Graph showing the proportion of schools, by percentage, that have total enrolments of less than 1,000, between 1000 and 1,499 and more than 1,500.

The next section of Part 1 of the questionnaire obtained data about the number of full-time employees – teaching, support and operational staff. Figure 4.2 shows the number of staff employed in the schools. Principals responded by providing the total number of staff employed in their schools. Sixty-eight percent of the 72 schools have a total staff of more than 150 and 89% of schools have a total staff of more than 100. All schools have a total staff of more than 50.
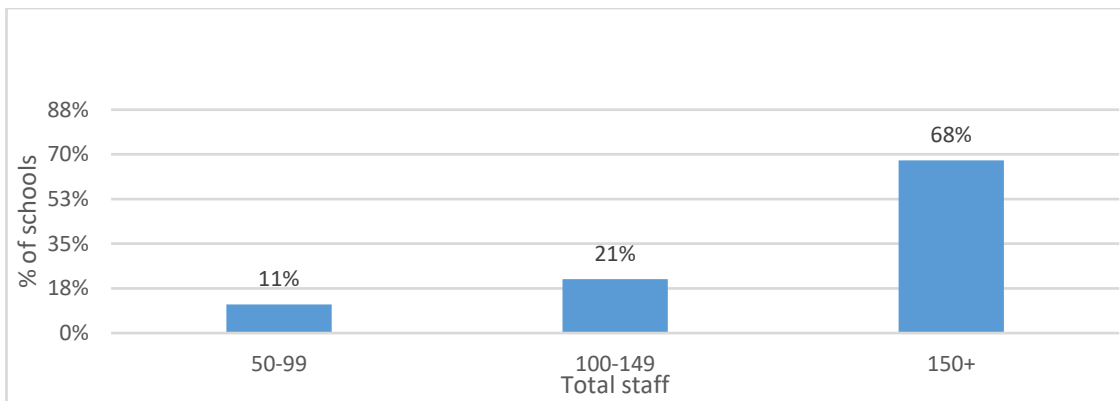
Figure 4.2. Graph showing the proportion of schools, by percentage, that have total staff numbers of less than 100, between 100 and 149, and more than 150.

Data were obtained from 72 participating principals about the total annual recurrent income available to the schools. Figure 4.3 shows the percentage of schools with a total recurrent income in three income ranges. The total recurrent income is the school's annual income in 2015 from all sources: parent fees, state and commonwealth funding; and private donations and fund-raising. Seventy-one

percent of the schools had an annual operating income in 2015 of more than $20.0M and 88% of the schools had an annual income of more than $15.0M.
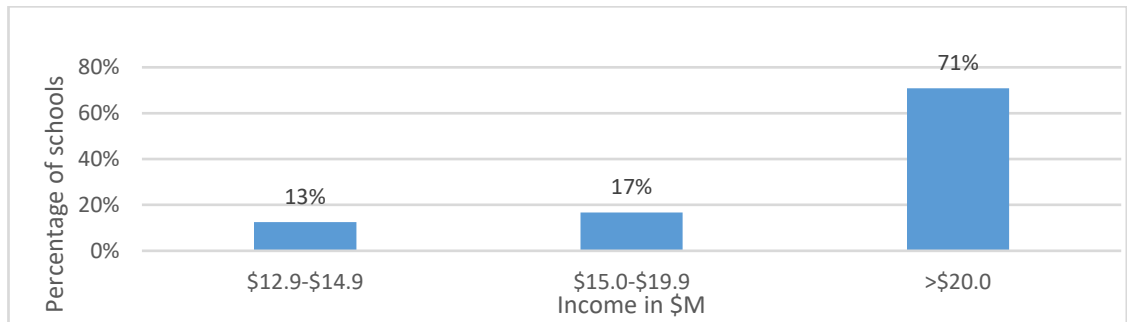
Figure 4.3. Graph showing the proportion of schools, by percentage, that have a total recurrent income of less than $15.0M, between $15.0M and $20.0M, and greater than $20.0M.

Principals were also asked to provide data on the extent of capital works. Figure 4.4 shows the percentage of schools that spent $10 million or more, on capital expenditure in the five-year period from 2011 to 2015.
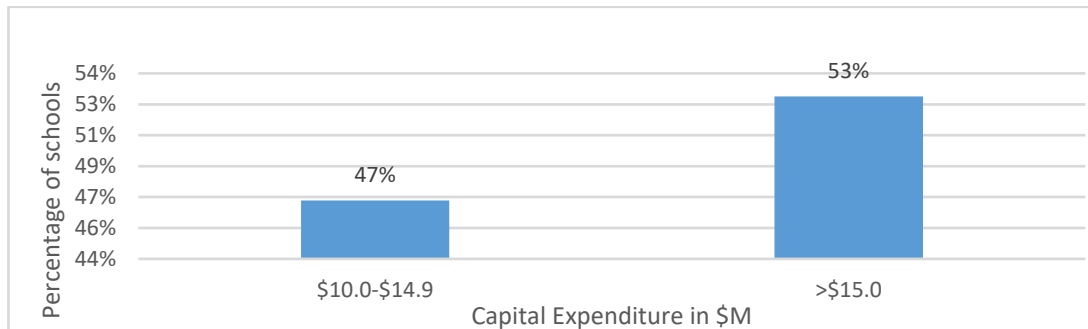
Figure 4.4. Graph showing the proportion of schools, by percentage, that had expenditure on capital less than $15.0M and greater than $15.0M across the five year period from 2011 to 2015.

Capital expenditure is the amount of money spent on capital development, new buildings and assets, and on the refurbishment and upgrade of buildings and assets. Fifty-three percent of schools spent more than $15.M in the period, and all schools spent more than $10.M on capital in that same five-year period.

This sample of 72 principals, representing independent school principals in Australia, lead and manage large businesses. Table 4.2 shows the criteria that were used to assess whether a school, as a business, is a large business. The following demographic data support this claim:

- 79% of the principals manage a school enrolment of more than 1,000 students;
- 89% of the principals' lead and manage staffs of more than 100;
- 100% of the schools employ more than 50 staff;
- 71% of the principals managed a budget with a total recurrent income of more than $20M; and
- 53% of the principals managed capital expenditure of more than $15M over the last five years.

Table 4.2

Criteria Used to Assess Whether a School Could be Considered a Large Business

Criteria	Verification used
Enrolment	In 2015, just 17% of Australia's 1,016 independent schools had an enrolment of more than 1,000 students, with an average school size of 521. The average size of a government school in Australia in 2015 was 360 students (Independent Schools Council of Australia [ISCA], 2015).
Employees	The Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC) regard a business with more than 50 employees as a large company (ASIC, 2014).
Finances	ASIC (2014) regard a large business as one with the value of the gross assets at the end of the financial year of the business it controls being $12.5 million.

4.3. Part 2: Qualities and Values of Effective Independent School Principals

From the more than 50 qualities and values found in the literature, I reduced the large set to 24. These were the 24 found most consistently in the literature and were presented in Table 2.2 in Chapter Two. I decided to split this large set into two sub-lists: qualities and values, Part 2, and practices and strategies, Part 3. Qualities refer to the values, beliefs and attributes that a principal draws on to make the decisions they must make. Practices denote the strategies and behaviours used by principals to enact their leadership. Splitting the large set into two sets provided the principals with a manageable, smaller set that could be more readily considered and

evaluated. Part 2 of the questionnaire looked at the qualities and values, section 4.4 to follow, considered the practices and strategies, Part 3.

Principals re-ordered the set of qualities and values that were presented to them in the questionnaire in terms of their relative importance for the leadership provided by a principal in an independent school in Australia, from the most important (1) through to the least important (12). Table 4.3 shows how respondents ordered the qualities and values. The values are expressed as a weighted average.

Table 4.3

Qualities and Values Ranked in Order of Relative Importance Using Weighted Average

Rank	Qualities and values	Weighted Average
1	have a strong connection with the ethos and culture of the school they lead	2.5
2	have the capacity to see and keep in mind the big picture	3.9
3	have a clear sense of moral purpose grounded in what is right and proper for the school	5.1
4	be able to motivate and manage change in an organised, positive, and enduring fashion	6.2
5	have a strong, personal depth of knowledge regarding curriculum, instruction, and learning	7.1
6	be a confident communicator, a great persuader who can get their message across	8.0
7	place a high value on collaboration and value the contributions that others can make	8.2
8	value respect, promote personal and professional integrity, insisting on high standards	9.6
9	be aspirational, holding high expectations for staff and student achievement	9.8
10	have a passionate belief in the significance of what they do	10.1
11	Have high emotional intelligence	11.2
12	Have the capacity to empathise, and connect with individual students, parents and teachers	11.6

Note. The weighted average is calculated by giving values in the data set more weight/influence according to the importance assigned by the respondent. For example, if a quality/value is rated as the most important by a respondent, then a weighting of 1 is assigned. If a quality/value was ordered as number seven by a respondent, it would be assigned a weighting of 7. The result is that the quality/value with the lowest weighted average is regarded as the most important by the research group of principals.

In response to these observations, a second level of analysis was undertaken to test the reliability of the first analysis, and to see if there were any differences. This second analysis examined the number of times a principal ranked a quality/value at 1, 2 or 3 – that is, one of the top three rankings. The results are illustrated in Table 4.4, showing the highest ranked qualities and values through to the lower ranked.

While the data were analysed in two different ways, there were three qualities/values that appeared in the top five in each analysis:

1. have a strong connection with the ethos and culture of the school they lead;
2. have a clear sense of moral purpose grounded in what is right and proper for the school; and
3. have the capacity to see and keep in mind the big picture.

These three qualities/values emerge as the most important from the perspectives of the principals involved in the quantitative research.

4.3.1. Qualities and values missing from the list.

In this part of the questionnaire, principals identified any qualities/values missing from the list of 12 presented in the questionnaire. Table 4.5 shows the words used by the principals to describe the missing qualities/values. They have been categorised according to like meanings.

Table 4.4

Qualities and Values Ranked at 1, 2 or 3 by the Respondents

Rank	Qualities and Values	% @ 1,2,3
1	have a strong connection with the ethos and culture of the school they lead	69.2
2	have a clear sense of moral purpose grounded in what is right and proper for the school	58.2
3	have a passionate belief in the significance of what they do	40.0
4	be aspirational, holding high expectations for staff and student achievement	27.3
5	have the capacity to see and keep in mind the =big picture	21.5
6	value respect, promote personal and professional integrity, insisting on high standards	20.9
7	place high value on collaboration and value the contributions that others can make	20.0
8	have high emotional intelligence	15.2
9	be able to motivate and manage change in an organised, positive, and enduring fashion	10.6
10	have a strong, personal depth of knowledge regarding curriculum, instruction, and learning	7.7
11	be a confident communicator, a great persuader who can get their message across	7.6
12	have the capacity to empathise, and connect with individual students, parents and teachers	7.6

Note. The quality/value, 'have a strong connection with the ethos and culture of the school they lead', achieved a percentage of 69.2, meaning that 69.2% of the respondents rated this quality/value at a level of importance of 1, 2, or 3. Collectively then, the group of principals rate this as the most important.

Table 4.5

Qualities and Values Missing from the List of Twelve Provided in the Questionnaire

Category	Qualities and Values
Resilience	endurance, energy, drive, enthusiasm, perseverance, wellbeing, thick skin, stamina, toughness, good health, balanced lifestyle
Integrity	humility, honesty, kindness, trustworthiness, sense of humour, human
Emotional Intelligence	learner, reflective, thinker, listener, asks good questions, agile, adaptable, fallible, forgiving, creativity
Community	community builder, valuing community, connect with community and external groups, building partnerships and relationships, engendering confidence
Acumen	understanding business and governance, having a futures perspective, intelligent, ability to multitask, business acumen, applies knowledge to practice, conflict resolution

Four points of emphasis emerge from this set:

1. the attributes aligned with resilience and integrity are important;

2. emotional intelligence was part of the original list, this would indicate there is no common understanding amongst principals of what emotional intelligence is;

3. the importance of community building, internal and external; and

4. having significant acumen to run a large business.

4.4. Part 3: Practices and Strategies of Effective Independent School Principals

Section 4.3 of this chapter considered the qualities and values of principals; this section looks at the practices and strategies, Part 3. Principals were asked to re-order the set of practices and strategies in the questionnaire from the most important (1) through to the least important (12). Table 4.6 shows how respondents ordered the practices and strategies from the most important, through to the least. Once again, the values are expressed as a weighted average.

Table 4.6

Practices and Strategies Ranked in Order of Relative Importance Using Weighted Average

Rank	Practices and Strategies	Average
1	establishes a clear focus on learning, for all within their school	3.4
2	are strategic thinkers, they are visionaries and very good at realising that vision	3.5
3	focuses on students, bases decisions on what is best for all students	3.8
4	builds high performing teams, they are coalition builders, they like coaching and mentoring others	4.3
5	actively builds a collaborative, collegial and inclusive school culture	5.4
6	challenges practices and behaviours which are not aligned with school values and beliefs	5.4
7	ensures they are visible and approachable, they make themselves available	5.9
8	has a strong ethic of care and works hard to ensure a safe and orderly school environment	5.9
9	leads change, they challenge the status quo, providing inspiration and energy	6.0
10	regularly checks the pulse of the school, addressing current and potential problems	6.6
11	work tirelessly on effective communication and community relations	7.3
12	is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment	9.0

A second analysis of the data was undertaken to validate the first analysis. This second analysis examined the number of times a principal ranked a practice/strategy at 1, 2 or 3. The results are illustrated in Table 4.7.

The same five practices/strategies appeared at the top of the rankings in each analysis:

1. are strategic thinkers, they are visionaries and very good at realising that vision;
2. establishes a clear focus on learning, for all within their school;
3. focuses on students; bases decisions on what is best for all students;

4. builds high performing teams, they are coalition builders, they like coaching and mentoring others; and

5. actively builds a collaborative, collegial and inclusive school culture.

Even though the data depicted in Table 4.6 and Table 4.7 have been analysed in different ways; the top ranked practices and strategies that emerged from the analyses are the same. This validates the importance assigned to these by the principals themselves.

Table 4.7

Practices and Strategies Ranked at 1, 2 or 3, Respondents Expressed as a Percentage

Rank	Practices and Strategies	% @ 1,2,3
1	are strategic thinkers, they are visionaries and very good at realising that vision	57.4
2	establishes a clear focus on learning, for all within their school	53.7
3	focuses on students; bases decisions on what is best for all students	52.2
4	builds high performing teams; they are coalition builders; they like coaching and mentoring others	29.9
5	actively builds a collaborative, collegial and inclusive school culture	19.7
6	has a strong ethic of care and works hard to ensure a safe and orderly school environment	19.7
7	ensures they are visible and approachable; they make themselves available	19.4
8	challenges practices and behaviours which are not aligned with school values and beliefs	19.4
9	leads change, they challenge the status quo, providing inspiration and energy	14.9
10	work tirelessly on effective communication and community relations	9.0
11	regularly checks the pulse of the school, addressing current and potential problems	3.0

| 12 | is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment | 3.0 |

4.4.1. Practices and strategies missing from the list.

Principals nominated practices/strategies that were missing from the list of 12 presented in the questionnaire. Table 4.8 shows the words/terms that were used by the principals to describe the practices/strategies that were missing.

Table 4.8

Practices and Strategies Missing from the List of Twelve Provided in the Questionnaire

Category	Practice and Strategy
Relationships	building relationships with stakeholders, forging relationships with peers, leading the board, networking with external bodies and other schools, works to have a strong relationship with the chair
Developing others	develops staff, develops leaders, supervises and nurtures teachers, observes teacher practise, assists other schools with advice
Leadership capacity	personal accountability, being an ambassador for the school in external settings; project management, focusing on *tomorrow* and not today, able to manage a multitude of complex tasks simultaneously, political acumen

The most telling omission is the leader's capacity to perform at the levels required and to meet the expectations of the community. Leadership capacity, it would seem, is an important component of the principal's effectiveness according to the principals who provided additional comments.

4.5. Part 4: Expectations Held for Independent School Principals by their Employers

This part of the questionnaire, Part 4, was developed after reviewing the prospectuses used by boards to appoint independent school principals. Prospectuses

establish the position description, cultural context, and accountabilities that boards have for prospective principal employees. The prospectuses establish the qualities and values that principals are expected to have and a set of responsibilities that principals are accountable for, in their leadership. These were put to the principals in the questionnaire and principals rated these expectations using a Likert-scale:

1. highly appropriate;
2. appropriate;
3. neither appropriate/inappropriate;
4. inappropriate; and
5. highly inappropriate.

Table 4.9 shows how principals rated each expectation regarding appropriateness to their role and responsibilities. The statistical measure used to form the table list is the mean. The mean is a basic statistical measure, the average of a set of numerical values, as calculated by adding them together and dividing by the number of terms in the set. For example, if 'recruit, retain and develop high calibre staff', was ranked 1, 2, 2, 3, 2 by five principals, then the mean would be 2, calculated by $(1+2+2+3+2)/5 = 10/5 = 2$.

Table 4.9

Expectations of Principals Ranked by Relative Appropriateness

Rank	Expectations	Mean
1	recruit, retain and develop high calibre staff	1.1
2	ensure that all students are provided with a safe and supporting learning and physical environment	1.1
3	engage with the School Board in developing, implementing and monitoring the mission and vision for the school	1.2
4	build an appropriate school culture and sustain this culture for the next generation	1.2
5	ensure that effective strategic planning for the growth and improvement of the school is undertaken	1.2
6	ensure that the school complies with all state and federal requirements	1.3
7	grow a sustainable enrolment base and ensuring the future viability of the school	1.3
8	have a presence; ability to positively and effectively represent the school to all stakeholder groups and the wider community	1.3
9	develop the school's distinctive educational programs and sustain the programs through continual improvement	1.3
10	enhance the reputation of the school in the wider community	1.4
11	nurture and cultivate the religious, spiritual or values-laden dimension of the school	1.4
12	build and sustain a culture of educational innovation involving risk taking and creativity	1.5
13	meet explicit accountabilities to their parent and school communities, and other stakeholders	1.7
14	protect the school's heritage, celebrating the past and preserving important cultural foundations	1.7

There is very little discernment between the expectations; they range from a mean score of 1.1 through to 1.7. This means that the principals judged all the expectations as either 'highly appropriate' or 'appropriate'. Very rarely were any of the other classifiers on the Likert scale used.

To further discriminate between the expectations, a second analysis was undertaken. Table 4.10 shows this second analysis which looked at the percentage of principals who ranked a particular expectation at 1 (highly appropriate) and shows the voting patterns of the principals for each of the expectations. There were 68 principals who responded to this part of the questionnaire. The significance of this table lies in the fact that more than half of the principals rated the first 12 expectations as 'highly appropriate'. Expectations 13 and 14, while not as significant in the minds of these principals, achieved a percentage of principals who ranked these two at 'highly appropriate' or 'appropriate' at 91% and 90% respectively, still very high. This validates the data shown in Table 4.9, the first analysis and the conclusion drawn is that all the expectations are appropriate for an independent school principal, from the perspective of the principals themselves. Principals involved in this research agree that these expectations and responsibilities properly reflected their role.

4.5.1. Expectations missing from the list generated from appointment prospectuses.

Principals nominated other expectations missing from the list. The purpose of this section of the questionnaire was to see if principals felt their role was more extensive than depicted in the set of 14 expectations and responsibilities drawn from prospectuses. The following set of expectations was extracted verbatim from the questionnaire responses. Table 4.11 lists all the expectations that principals perceived were missing, with no analysis of the data, other than to group like expectations together. There were 16 principals who provided an additional comment.

Table 4.10

Expectations in Order of Percentage of Times an Expectation was Ranked at 1 (Highly Appropriate) and the Voting Pattern

Rank	% @ HA	Expectations	1	2	3	4	5
1	90	recruit, retain and develop high calibre staff	61	6	1	0	0
2	87	ensure that all students are provided with a safe and supporting learning and physical environment	59	9	0	0	0
3	87	engage with the School Board in developing, implementing and monitoring the mission and vision for the school	59	7	2	0	0
4	81	build an appropriate school culture and sustain this culture for the next generation	55	13	0	0	0
5	79	ensure that effective strategic planning for the growth and improvement of the school is undertaken	54	13	1	0	0
6	74	grow a sustainable enrolment base and ensuring the future viability of the school	50	17	1	0	0
7	74	ensure that the school complies with all state and federal requirements	50	16	1	0	0
8	69	have a presence; ability to positively and effectively represent the school to all stakeholder groups and the wider community	47	20	1	0	0
9	68	develop the school's distinctive educational programs and sustain the programs through continual improvement	46	21	1	0	0
10	65	enhance the reputation of the school in the wider community	44	22	2	0	0
11	63	nurture and cultivate the religious, spiritual or values-laden dimension of the school	43	21	4	0	0
12	56	build and sustain a culture of educational innovation involving risk taking and creativity	38	24	5	1	0
13	41	meet explicit accountabilities to their parent and school communities, and other stakeholders	28	34	4	2	0
14	35	protect the school's heritage, celebrating the past and preserving important cultural foundations	24	37	5	1	0

Table 4.11

Expectations Missing from the List Generated for the Questionnaire

Seven respondents said there were no expectations to be added
not possible to list as they are all key to the role
I could only place two as marginally less important
I find it not possible to answer question 17 in any meaningful way
listen well, respond constructively to criticism, stay humble
staying alive and sane
to do it all well
engagement with governments, networking with other schools and jurisdictions, managing of budgets
the spiritual element would be very important for religious schools
pastoral care of staff, role as school, national and international educational leader, be aware of Govt and community education agendas, be highly trained and updated in all areas of school management, lead the school during a crisis, be public face, i.e. media, the list is endless

These additional comments about the expectations add weight to the earlier analysis, the role of an independent school principal brings with it high levels of responsibility and accountability. This finding will be explored further in the case study research.

4.6. Comparing Research Findings with the Literature Review

Hall et al. (2016) claim there are too many skills and strategies that have been argued as the basis of effective leadership. Attempting to cover each is too cumbersome and exhausting. From the literature review, 24 qualities, values, practices, and strategies that effective principals should possess or enact were investigated in this quantitative phase of the mixed methods research. Principals were invited to identify the most important. Further they were asked to evaluate the

role expectations and responsibilities held for principals by their boards and school communities.

A sub-set of qualities/values and practices/strategies emerged from the analysis. This group of principals identified the following, drawn from the literature, as the most important for their context. Effective principals of large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia:

1. have a strong connection with the ethos and culture of the school they lead (Day & Gurr, 2014; Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2006; Zammit et al., 2007).

2. have a clear sense of moral purpose grounded in what is right and proper for the school (Day & Gurr, 2014; Duignan & Gurr, 2007; Sutcliffe, 2013).

3. have the capacity to see and keep in mind the big picture (Brock & Grady, 2012; Doherty, 2008a; Spiro, 2013; Sutcliffe, 2013).

4. have a passionate belief in the significance of what they do (Duignan & Gurr, 2007; Gurr et al., 2006; Gurr et al., 2005; McEwan, 2003).

5. establish a clear focus on learning, for all within their school (DuFour, 2002; Jones & Harris, 2014; Sergiovanni, 2007; Sterrett, 2011).

6. are strategic thinkers, they are visionaries and very good at realising that vision (Brock & Grady, 2012; Doherty, 2008b; Spiro, 2013; Sutcliffe, 2013).

7. focus on students, they base decisions on what is best for all students (Degenhardt & Duignan, 2010; Gurr, Drysdale, & Mulford, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2007).

8. build high performing teams, they are coalition builders, and they like coaching and mentoring others (Brock & Grady, 2012; Kets De Vries, 2012; McEwan, 2003).

There are some differences between the literature findings and the results of the research, but only as they relate to relative importance, rather than any disparity per se. This group of principals did not place the same level of importance on instructional leadership as was found in the literature (Garza et al., 2014; Hall et al., 2016; Jones & Harris, 2014; McEwan, 2003; Parylo & Zepeda, 2014; Robinson, 2011; Spiro, 2013). The review of the literature found that authors consistently

claimed that instructional leadership was one of the most important aspects of the principal's role. The findings of this research show that independent school principals in this research believe it is important, but not to the extent claimed in the literature. This particular aspect of the principal's role is explored in the qualitative research.

Independent school principals in the quantitative research did not identify with 'be a confident communicator, a great persuader who can get their message across' to the same extent as found in the literature (Cotton, 2003; McEwan, 2003; Parylo & Zepeda, 2014; Sutcliffe, 2013; Zammit et al., 2007). These writers all claim that this practice is commonplace with effective principals. Independent school principals did not perceive this to be nearly as important as other qualities and practices. This will also be further explored in the qualitative research.

The practice and strategy, 'regularly checks the pulse of the school, addressing current and potential problems', did not find support with this group of independent school principals, to the extent claimed in the literature. There are several writers in the field who claim this is an important leadership strategy of successful principals (Brock & Grady, 2012; Notman & Henry, 2011; Sterrett, 2011). Keeping in mind that the research group of principals does not see this practice/strategy as unimportant, this practice rates amongst the least important. Further investigation of this apparent difference was also required.

4.7. Comparison Between Board Expectations and Principals' Perceptions of their Role

This research group of independent school principals clarified the expectations held for them by boards, explicitly expressed in the recruitment prospectuses for their appointment, as most appropriate. There was agreement between the expectations held by boards and the principal's perceptions of their roles. The five (from the set of 14) considered to be most appropriate are:

1. recruit, retain and develop high calibre staff;
2. engage with the school board in developing, implementing and monitoring the mission and vision for the school;

3. ensure that all students are provided with a safe and supporting learning and physical environment;

4. build an appropriate school culture and sustain this culture for the next generation; and

5. ensure that effective strategic planning for the growth and improvement of the school is undertaken.

4.8. Questionnaire Findings (Phase 1) and the Case Study Research (Phase 2)

The questionnaire data provided broad perspectives and viewpoints, which were investigated in greater depth by the case study research with four of the principals who participated in the on-line questionnaire. The case study inquired more deeply about what the four case study principals personally believed make an effective leader of large, autonomous, P-12, independent schools in Australia.

The following general research questions were developed from the survey and subsequently explored during the case study research which was conducted in the case study principal's schools.

1. What do principals perceive to be the most important qualities, values, practices, and strategies for independent school principals to possess or enact to be effective?

2. How do principals respond to the set of expectations and responsibilities held for them by local boards and school communities?

3. What do principals believe it takes to be effective in leading large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia?

4. How do principals define effectiveness in their context?

5. If a principal was asked to measure the effectiveness of a colleague, what would be the ruler to measure effectiveness? What criteria would a principal use to judge if they were effective?

6. How do principals conceptualise their roles?

7. What are the critical elements of the role of an independent school principal?

8. What models of leadership do principals think apply to their context?

For Phase 2, the researcher observed what the principals were doing in their daily work that is an expression of their qualities/values and showed them employing particular practices/strategies and fulfilling their responsibilities. The observations enabled the researcher to see what principals were doing in their work without having to rely on what they say they do.

During the site visits, the researcher collected relevant documents. These were publicly available documents such as prospectuses, annual reports, annual or quarterly magazines, and occasional speeches. In selecting appropriate documents, the researcher looked for those documents that provided insights into the principal's values/qualities and practices/strategies. These documents were collected to provide corroboration for the principal's commentary about their work and they allowed the researcher to explore more deeply the leadership of the principal in their context.

4.9. Summary

The quantitative phase of this mixed methods research found that there are a number of distinct strands of effective principal leadership in independent schools. These strands were identified by the research group of principals as being the most important in their context. Effective principals in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools:

- have a strong connection with the ethos and culture of the school they lead;
- have a passionate belief in the significance of what they do and a belief that they can make a real difference in their school communities;
- focus on student outcomes, basing decisions on what is best for students;
- establish a clear focus on learning and make a genuine commitment to student and community learning;
- provide a strong ethic of care, a safe and supportive learning environment;
- shape a shared school vision, thinking strategically and planning for the future;
- partner with the school board to develop, implement and monitor the school's mission;

- actively build a collaborative school culture in which the mission/vision can be achieved;

- invest in the development of people, and recruit, develop and retain quality staff;

- build high performing teams, provide support and build individual capacity in staff;

- build community and build school capacity to support successful student outcomes; and

- have a particular set of personal qualities (resilience, perseverance, courage and integrity) which buttress their leadership capacity.

This concludes the data representation and analysis for the first phase of the mixed methods research, the quantitative phase. In keeping with the explanatory sequential design, the findings from this phase inform the next chapter, the qualitative research phase.

Chapter Five: Multiple Case Study Using Narrative Techniques

5.1. Introduction

Qualitative research followed the quantitative phase in this mixed methods explanatory sequential design. General perspectives and viewpoints obtained from the quantitative data analysis were developed in much greater depth using a multiple case study approach (Bryman et al., 1996). Four principals were interviewed in their schools and interviews were digitally recorded. I used one-on-one interviewing of the principals as the primary technique, with observations and document analysis (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975) used to describe the context for each case study. The digital recordings were transcribed, and from the recordings, narratives were generated to tell the principals' own stories, presenting their perspectives, and capturing their theories and beliefs in a holistic way. For each of the case studies, I have added my own commentary of the principal's perspectives and then presented the themes to emerge from the particular case. This same approach was used for each of the narratives of the four case studies and involved seven sections:

1. Scene setting – which describes the principal as a person, his/her background and leadership profile, and the school's context;

2. Values and beliefs – the principal explains the key values and beliefs that guide their actions and decisions;

3. Conceptions of the role – the principal describes their role, the responsibilities and the expectations held for them;

4. Perspectives on effectiveness – the principal explains their views and perceptions about what it takes to be effective in their context;

5. Managing the demands of the role – the principal explains how they manage the demands of the role of being a principal of a large, P-12, autonomous, independent school in Australia;

6. My commentary on the narrative; and

7. Themes to emerge from each case.

A draft of each narrative was provided to each one of the case study principals. They were asked to read the narrative and let me know if they wanted to make any changes. It was emphasised to each that it was important that their voice was properly represented. None of the case study principal sought any changes.

5.2. Narratives

5.2.1. Narrative – Adam.

5.2.1.1. Scene setting.

Adam has been Principal of Regional College, a faith-based co-educational school in the outer suburbs of a large provincial city, since 2010. A very experienced principal in both independent and government schools, Adam is actively involved in educational and management professional associations, sits on a state-based schools association board and had received awards for management.

Regional is a young school, established in the early 1990s with its foundations going back to the mid-1800s, to a small inner-city school. Regional is a day school of over 1,300 students across three sub-schools, with a significant international students' program. More than 150 staff are employed at Regional. The total gross annual income in 2015 derived from government funding; fees, charges and parent contributions; and private sources, was just under $25 million. In the period from 2009 to 2015, the school spent just under $50 million on capital works.

The governing body of the school is the College Council, a body of eminent members of the Church and community whose role is to provide governance and strategic direction to the school. The Council, which had 14 members at the time of the research, has delegated authorities from and responsibilities to the diocesan council. Adam is supported by a Deputy Principal, Heads of Junior, Middle and Senior Schools, Director of International Students Program, Business Manager, Director of Curriculum, Director of Marketing and Business Development, and Director of Arts and Extra-Curricular. Regional is in a rural area, located in the heart of native bush and farming land.

As I drove into the college, I noticed the expansive grounds, occupying 70-acres; land holdings of this size are rare in schools across Australia. On arrival, I was

greeted with a beaming smile and a hearty welcome from Adam. He exuded energy and enthusiasm, and it was clear that his immediate priority was to show me his school. Adam, keen for a coffee, took me straight to the cafeteria where he engaged amiably with the staff, obviously knowing them well and chatting to them about interests and family. I was included as if I was a regular visitor to this part of the school. As we walked and talked, he made sure he spoke to anyone who we came across, extending a warm hello, engaging with each student and staff member at a level of familiarity, and introducing me as a colleague. There was a clear sense that Adam was proud of his community. In these early conversations he was keen to speak about the existing school spirit, describing how different it was from the school he was appointed to back in 2010. The sense of pride and accomplishment was evident as Adam picked up rare pieces of litter, corrected a student not wearing their uniform to his high standard, pointed to future capital works and reflected on the achievements of the school during his principalship. He shared with me the school's growth and development since 1994, a period in its history when it had just 225 students, to the school today, with over 1,300 students. This was his school, yet I could sense that it was a family and a community school. From the early discussions, it seemed to me that Adam wanted everyone in the school to feel part of the community.

Regional is a relatively new school on a new site, with a low socio-economic profile, and with comparatively low fees. This demographic would suggest that the school could find it challenging to have a dynamic building program, yet the school held extensive assets and facilities, showing a vibrant capital program. I got a clear sense that Adam was a leader who was ambitious for his community and aspirational for what they could achieve together. It appeared to me that Adam was a principal who was well-liked and well-respected by those people in his community that we encountered. I found him to be warm and affable and keenly connected with the people who came across our path.

5.2.1.2. Adam's explanation of his values and beliefs.

Adam knows he must be sensitive to the school's context when he makes decisions. He believes that the principal must have the appropriate values and skills to respond to the school's context:

I think you've got to be certain about who you are on behalf of the organisation and you need to know that your set of values and your capacity and skills, are what is needed at this time in the organisation's life. So, context matters. A principal who is highly effective in this particular school could be transplanted to another setting and be ineffective.

Adam explored the findings from the analysis of the questionnaire with respect to the qualities/values that principals should have…*all of these are really important, and I found it really difficult to prioritise some over others.* However, he did particularly identify with two:

If you've got a clear sense of moral purpose, then you will have the capacity to critically evaluate your culture. If then you have the capacity to motivate change then you can put into place the ways in which it needs to be changed.

Adam also saw *the capacity to see and keep in mind the big picture*, as important. It was a mind-set that he held, to be,

-aspirational and hold high expectations of staff and student achievement. I realised it was a school that had enormous potential and it was underperforming in just about every area; it was just spiralling downwards. Parents and staff were introspective about the school and it took me a good 18 months to two years to get them to lift their heads up.

Driven by moral purpose and valuing the contribution of people, Adam shows that he understands the school's demographic and is sensitive to how this influences his capacity to bring about the changes that are needed:

This school is very unique in many ways. There is a mix of people coming in from different parts. We've got a 360-degree catchment, an hour's drive each way. I value highly the interactions that I have with my people every day. I think it is important to affirm them, encourage them. I like people to think I'm a human being.

My reflection: It seems Adam believed he needed to lead cultural change, to lift the hopes and the aspirations of the community. He believed he had the qualities, values and capabilities that were needed and the ability to be able to persevere because of the significant work that was needed to be done.

5.2.1.3. Adam describes his conception of the role.

Adam sees his role is to plan for the school's future. He explains the approach he took to strategic planning:

> *In 2011, the strategic intent at that time was unsurprisingly, to raise expectations for and on behalf of our community. That was about reputation building. We refreshed that plan once and we got about two and a half years out of it. I wanted to find a methodology that was a little bit more forward reaching and forward thinking. So, we used scenario building, for 15 years into the future. ... we are now doing real strategic work.*

He sees his role is to be inclusive and to value the contributions others could make, particularly his senior team:

> *I make one of the members of the senior team responsible for one of the projects and they have a project team to support them. So, it is a team responsibility and there is a set of accountabilities around that for the team. However, ultimately, I make the decisions.*

> *I use a narrative here; I just say we can have a conversation about this, but I just need to tell you again and remind you again, this is not a democracy people, right, this is not a democracy, at the end of the day, I'm making the call.*

Developing the leadership capacity in his senior leadership team is a major component of Adam's role: *I delegate significantly to those people.* [for example] *My heads of school would have the capacity to recommend to me termination of enrolments and they also have the delegated capacity to refuse an enrolment if there was a particular issue.* While his executive leaders enjoy autonomy, he also holds them accountable: *...we operate on a business case model here, if you want something, get your business model out. If they don't, I suggest they might take it away and bring it back.* After further reflection, Adam added,

> *If you are not always looking to lead and to change, in this current environment, you are going to be as good as dead very soon. It was important for me to lead change, challenging the status quo, providing*

inspiration and energy. I've got really good people; I just don't think they
are confident enough to lead.

What is best for students is what Adam uses to evaluate any change proposal:

… it comes down to, decisions based on what is the best for all students
[and]…how we make decisions is a combination of using student survey
data, our student results, and about what is happening in the research space.

Adam appreciates that one of the most important relationships he has within
his community is his board, acknowledging that e*ngagement with the school board*
in mission and vision, is critical. He explained how he took measures to have board
members removed because they weren't supporting the culture he valued: *This time*
last year I got rid of three board members in one hit. So, three board members
causing me trouble, and at the end of the day if the board didn't support me I was
prepared to walk.

Adam reflected upon the various models of leadership that were presented in
the quantitative data:

My people want a person who can make good decisions, who can consult, be
decisive, set direction, but also involve people; they expect leadership. They
want me to set the culture.

Adam gave further thought to the models of leadership, and added:

Our role is defined by those categories of leadership, symbolic, people,
spiritual, transactional, parallel, distributed, and so on. If I was to
conceptualise the role, it would be all those different types of leadership and
what that looks like in my school or that person's school. The models have to
keep evolving to reflect the complexity of the job. All of the models, at some
point in our role, have applicability.

Adam added that while instructional leadership was not ranked as high as
others by principals in the questionnaire, it was a high priority for him.

It ranks very highly with me; my senior people will tell you it is really
important to me. We have regular conversations about instructional
leadership. Principals trust the delegation of that role to other people. I think
principals ignore it at their peril. You have to be able to engage with the

*important stuff around instructional leadership, otherwise you will lose your
reputation, and respect with staff.*

Adam added that Christian leadership in faith-based schools is important:

*The church is a big political animal. The Christian leadership expectations
impact on me. To be a principal of a religious school in this Diocese, you
have to have completed a theological qualification, so a Graduate Certificate
in Theology is the minimum. You've got to be a member of a church and
attend on Sundays. From time to time I have to give sermons.*

Adam indicated that there was one aspect of the role that did not emerge in the
questionnaire findings that ought to be included in the role of principal, that being a
CEO:

*...If you don't have business savvy or commercial savvy, or entrepreneurial
capacity then you seriously put yourself at risk [of losing your job].*

The extension of this from Adam's perspective is to that of CEO in a
business, but with one important difference:

*... as a CEO of a human services organisation we are not making widgets,
we don't have a conveyor belt. We've got people who have psychological,
academic, physical and emotional needs that vary from minute to minute,
second to second. It is not like a CEO in a corporation, people can't get
access to the CEO; but in our schools, people expect to be able to see the
principal.*

My reflection. Adam perceives the main part of his role is to plot the school's future
and ensure the future of the school. He knows he needs the support of his key people
and community to achieve this. Adam appears comfortable with the notion that his
enterprise is a large business and ought to be run like a business, and he is the CEO.

5.2.1.4. Adam's perspectives on principal leadership effectiveness in his context.

Adam believes that the effectiveness of the principal ultimately hinges on the
principal having the skills and capacity to manage the complexity of the job and the
skills that fit the leadership context:

...you've got to be effective across all of the areas, and that means you need to have an inordinate amount of skill. You can't do that yourself, and that means that you've got the responsibility to put in place top quality people, at a high leadership level in your school. So, that complexity, the high stakes nature, making sure all of these things are done really well, that is where the effectiveness of the principal hangs in the balance.

[and]... it is the way in which you apply those core skills to the situation, which makes the difference. If you have a proven effectiveness as a principal in an autonomous independent school setting, then the likelihood of your success in another context is probably significantly higher, than someone who hasn't demonstrated that. Your effectiveness is about how you embed yourself into that organisation and the way in which you respond to that culture.

However, Adam was reluctant to rate his own effectiveness, if he was to do that he would rely upon good metrics; data that were generated from surveys, and one of those metrics is the reputation of the school in the community:

... opinions of your stakeholder groups, your students, parents and your staff are important. What they think over a period of time, three, four and five years. Has the leadership of this principal made this school a better place?

He continued his reflection on effectiveness:

...it is related to the number of enrolments you've got, and that is to do with reputation, and reputation is to do with how your programs are perceived by your potential and current clients. I think enrolments indicate effectiveness.

Adam claims that to be effective a principal has to be a good listener, listening diligently and giving voice to staff - *you need to be able to listen to what other people are saying to you. Because if you don't listen to them, and hear the problems they've got, then you can't be operating effectively.*

Adam concluded this part of the case study interview reflecting that the tone in the school is a good indicator to judge the principal's effectiveness:

There are tangible signs in your school as you walk around which indicate how effective everything is. Behaviour of the kids, how they wear their uniform, level of litter and so on. The tone of the school gives a really good

indication of how things are going, and in turn, is the principal doing a good job.

My reflection. It appears that Adam views effectiveness as being able to manage the complexities of the role requiring significant acumen across all the important aspects of a school's operation. He also believes being able to use skills and traits for the leadership context is important and he claims that school tone and climate reflect the effectiveness of the principal.

5.2.1.5. Adam describes how he manages the demands of the role.

Adam recognised that the role is extensive and all-consuming – *the sheer size of it. The seven days a week type stuff, working until 11 o'clock at night. You'd better be passionate about what you are doing because it consumes your life.*

Adam acknowledged that the role is consistent with that of CEO from the business world and to manage these requirements he explains that he needs a rigorous learning and development program:

> *You get the skills and knowledge to perform at the level needed in two ways; through professional development opportunities, but you also get that through mentorship and coaching, or just situational observation. I also think formal masters qualifications in leadership and management are necessary. I am also a member of the CEO Institute and a member of the Australian Institute of Management.*

Upon deeper reflection on the demands, Adam pauses for a long period, before saying that it almost comes to the point where the role is not sustainable. Reflecting on the structures that may need to be in place to address this, he says:

> *We've got the feeling or sense that the current model of leadership in independent schools in Australia, is unsustainable. Maybe we can't sustain the leader who succeeds us so what is the model?*

In partial response to his own question, Adam reflects:

I think if you had enough resources, if I could put my fees up by 20% and employ six more (senior) staff, I could have a different model. I know that would then reduce my enrolments and put us under financial pressure.

My reflection: Adam manages the demands of the role by being passionate about his work and appreciating that his leadership has a significant positive impact on his school community. He knows he must take care of himself, physically, psychologically and spiritually. He attends to his own learning, ensuring he has the capacity to do what the job requires of him.

5.2.1.6. My commentary on Adam's narrative.

Adam came to Regional with a clear and decisive purpose about what he needed to do, he understood the school's context at the time, and believed he had the necessary skills and qualities for the challenges that lay ahead. Adam perceived that it was his purpose to lift the aspirations of the whole school community, which gave him direction and clarity around what change was needed. His story is about a school community with low morale and esteem, and his journey to move the school to a better place.

He believes he has provided strong educational leadership. He represents lifelong learning by his own commitment to learning and he leads from the front, the learning of the entire community. The tension that exists for Adam between delegation and ultimate accountability as principal, educational leader, and CEO, has been dealt with through distributed leadership, building the leadership capacity of others and the density of leadership in the school. At the same time, he has stayed close to his executive team providing coaching and direction as they make important decisions for the school. Adam's principalship story reflects the context he walked into when appointed to the school, a school that served low socio-economic communities characterised by low expectations for the achievement of the children in the area. His leadership was to lift expectations, through having high standards and providing the support that was needed to move his community.

5.2.1.7. Themes to emerge from Adam's case study.

Table 5.1

Themes to Emerge from Adam's Case Study

Categories	Themes
Values and beliefs	Being sensitive to the school's context and being cognisant of this when considering making changes to the school culture
	Holding a passion for the work of principal and a belief in the difference that can be made to the dreams and hopes of a community
	Carrying a moral purpose, lifting the sights and aspirations of the school community, to take them to a position they could not have envisioned on their own
	Having the capacity to see and keep in mind the big picture, thinking strategically, looking past the immediate and planning the future for the school, 15 years hence
Conceptions of the role	The Church likes to be involved in the school's operations and this must be managed; and providing Christian leadership
	Making decisions on what is in the best interests of students
	Having an effective partnership with the school board and the chair
	Being the CEO; managing the school's full operational requirements
	Holding staff accountable for their performance
	Purposefully sharing and distributing leadership, building the leadership capacity and density of the school
	Being the instructional leader, providing pedagogical leadership, and leading teaching and learning
	Motivate and manage change, and lead for improvement
	Being decisive when making decision, the community expect you to lead
Perspectives on effectiveness	Effectiveness should be judged by stakeholders using good metrics to elicit this feedback
	The impact the principal has on the tone in the school, or the school climate
	Leading effectively is dependent upon the principal understanding and reading correctly the context of the school
	Listening ethically to the community and connecting deeply with people in the community
	Ensuring the school has a strong reputation in the community that ensures sustainable enrolments are realised
	Having the skills and strategies to perform as the CEO
Managing the demands of the role	The role of principal of large, K-12, independent schools might not be sustainable
	Having a range of specific personal and professional qualities
	Developing others to build leadership density and share the leadership responsibilities
	Maintaining a rigorous growth and development program
	Being actively involved in professional learning, and professional associations and seeking support of colleagues

5.2.2. Narrative – Allan.

5.2.2.1. Scene setting.

Allan has been the Principal of Founders School, a faith-based, boys, K-12 independent school in Australia since 2008. A highly qualified and experienced principal actively engaged within the profession, Allan has led the school through one of its most ambitious reform programs, in terms of both organisation and development.

Established in the 1800s, Founders is an inner-city capital city school with three campuses located on three separate sites. The school has an enrolment of more than 2,000 students, a boarding house catering for up to 50 students, and more than 360 staff. The total gross annual income in 2015 derived from government funding; fees, charges and parent contributions; and private sources, was just under $60 million. In the period from 2009 to 2015, the school spent over $100 million on capital works.

Governance of Founders resides in the Board which, at the time of the research, comprised 19 directors, drawn from a wide cross-section of the community to provide the best possible leadership in executing the school's vision, mission and values. Each board member brings his/her own set of skills and knowledge to assist in implementing new plans and strategies for the school. The board of Founders is a legal entity in the form of a corporation constituted by statute. Allan attends all board meetings. He is supported in the leadership of the school by a senior executive: Deputy Principal and Head of Campus One; Head of Campus Two; Head of Campus Three; Head of Corporate Services; Deputy Head Campus One (Academics); Deputy Head Campus Two (Students); Director of Information Communications Technologies; and Director of Human Resources.

On arrival at Founders I entered the gates to the campus and drove toward the main buildings, arriving at a boom gate. I pressed the call button, announcing who I was and the purpose of my visit. The receptionist responded, 'welcome Mr Teys, we are expecting you.' I drove to the car parking spaces adjacent to the foundation building and spotted a car park with a reserved sign personalised with my name. I had only stepped from my car, and I was warmly greeted by Allan, with a generous

smile. On arrival to the reception desk to sign in as a visitor, I was met with a similar greeting, warmth and a wide smile. The culture evident in this school was immediately apparent; people matter.

As we walked about the campus, Allan struck a presence and stature, he was an imposing figure of influence and affability at the same time. He was warmly greeted by students and staff alike, and any visitors. Allan would pause and speak to any staff that came across our path, introducing me to the staff and making some comment to each that showed he knew them and was interested in them. As we walked and talked Allan embodied pride and awe of the school and its history and legacy, at the same time showing a deep sense of commitment to the students of the school today and those to come into the future. I observed how well boys were wearing their uniform and their ability to engage Allan, and me. I asked Allan how he knew so many boys, he said it was his commitment to get to know as many boys as possible.

The immediate observation to make was the immaculate presentation of the grounds, gardens, footpaths and buildings. All buildings, classrooms, and other learning spaces we entered were in very good condition, no signs of wear and tear, all areas were well kept. There were obvious signs of campus development and new capital projects, seamlessly built amongst older buildings which have been neatly refurbished and modernised. As I walked about the campus I was struck by the gravity of the oversight and supervision that is required to maintain the campus in this first-class condition.

5.2.2.2. Allan's explanation of his values and beliefs.

Allan stressed the importance of being the right fit for the school:

There is a good fit for me, here at Founders. Boards have to get this right and do their homework when choosing the most suitable applicant. I wasn't going to apply to Founders, but the head hunters called me up and said they had the school for me. I had a good look at the school and what was going, asked around about it, and thought it would be a school where there was a good fit.

Recognising the importance of having a strong connection with the ethos of the school Allan reflected that, *[n]ot having a connection with the ethos of the*

school, that's where a lot of principals get unstuck, because they get white line fever, having gone to a school that they do not have a strong connection with. Explaining this further, he used the example of how a principal going into a *diocesan run religious-based school where a commitment to the particular faith and traditions is important, then the principal needs to be a strong, committed [particular faith], because otherwise it is just a waste of time going…because it's not you.* Allan is quick to draw a line between the importance of the principal aligning with the ethos and foundations of the school in an authentic way, and simply adopting the culture that exists in the school, without evaluating the appropriateness of that culture. Allan believes that *the principal must have the capacity to evaluate the culture in place against the fundamental beliefs and philosophy upon which the school is founded.* For Allan, it follows that if changes need to be made, then that is his *responsibility to plot a strategic course of action and engage the community in the process of realising the change*. His compelling purpose is to do what is best for students:

> *I hope that Founders keeps the promotion of humanity as its core business. We owe it to the next generation to get it right. I remind staff at staff meetings that at the end of the day, the decision will be based on what is best for students and not what's best for staff. I try to achieve "win/win" outcomes, but in some circumstances, it will be what's best for the students.*

What is best for students extends to his philosophy of learning:

> *I like to make the distinction between the narrow definition of learning, as academic learning, and learning about one's character. Learning who you are and what you stand for and why. So, learning to me covers the whole person. We have a phrase, captured in our key messages, that emphasises our commitment to the whole person and the quality graduate we seek to develop.*

He knows what is needed by teachers to lead students on this journey of holistic learning. Allan uses a concept he calls **'**relational engagement' to explain a teacher's commitment to students and how they connect at a deeper personal level to ensure that learning can occur. He describes this as crucial for boys' education:

> *Once a boy knows that the teacher knows five things about them, then the teacher can start educating them. Once the boy knows you know five things*

he knows you care about him that is when you start being an effective teacher.

And relational engagement is no different at a leader's level. *I've got to know five things about my staff. I've done a test in a staff meeting – anyone can stand up and I've got to be able to say five things about them on the spot. I pass the test every time (so far).*

He holds an improvement agenda as important in his leadership. By his own admission, Allan says he is a restless leader: *We're restless because we always want to improve. Always constantly seeking to improve. I like to question what we do, confront the status quo, asking the difficult questions, having the hard conversations.*

Allan has firm views about the qualities and traits that are needed in principals, he claims integrity and honesty, are most important:

> *…you must lead by example, unless I lead by example, none of the things that you are trying to achieve will happen. It is my job to insist on high standards, it is vitally important in leadership. You have to consistently have high integrity in this job otherwise your whole leadership is not respected if you don't model your own integrity and honesty.*

He adds moral grit and ethical and moral decision making as important qualities:

> *…you decide on unethical strategies to combat this, that is just wrong. You come to some forks in the road when making decisions and it is good, in a meeting, to be able to say, no, that is not ethically or morally right, and we won't be doing that.*

My reflection: Allan seemed to espouse honesty and integrity as important traits and he focuses on the holistic development of students. The needs, interests and educational well-being of students are Allan's highest priority and he won't compromise on this. He constantly aims to do better, to seek improvement and growth in all aspects of his school.

5.2.2.3. Allan describes his conception of the role.

There is no ambiguity about how Allan sees his role, he *is responsible for the lot! My job is all about tomorrow; always about strategic planning and being future orientated. Obviously, I've got to make sure we're producing the product now but most of my focus is on where we are heading and how do we get there*. Allan claims a core part of his role is leading and managing change:

> *I tell staff if they don't like change, don't look in the mirror. The school is [number of years] years old, so our job is to make sure it is still here in another [same number] years. We are custodians, we have the responsibility to sustain the vision of the forefathers and holding dear to the traditions, values, ethos and culture.*

He works hard to create a climate where change is embraced and he encourages risk taking by allowing people to make mistakes as they try new ideas.

> *I am a kite flyer; floating ideas, putting the ideas up there, like a kite, and letting people have a shot at the ideas. I am not precious and welcome staff being critical of my ideas. If the kite is brought down because the idea didn't float, you simply dismiss the idea or adapt it. I am happy to keep putting kites up and in that way the whole team ends up owning the change.*

Allan has a clear approach to exploring change when newly appointed to a principal's role:

> *In the first six months, I only ask two questions, and I gather all my data on that. The first question I ask is what must not change? Secondly, what must change? You ask the boys, the parents and the staff those two questions and you get a really good estimate of what must, and must not change. Another phrase I use is, you don't pull a tree out of the ground to see how the roots are. So, you've got to find out how the roots are, what's the thing that sustains the school? My job is to prune a tree, not to cut it down or pull it out.*

While Allan has an appetite for change, he expects his staff to perform:

> *You want the staff to enjoy being at your school, but they also acknowledge too, there is an edginess to it too about your expectations – that is why I*

come back to the word restless on our expectations of staff. If we do what we do today, tomorrow, then we are standing still. And you can't tell them we can't improve on what we do.

As he reflects on his role at Founders, he identifies with eight major parts: *learning and teaching, wellbeing, co-curricular, spiritual, facilities, finance, staffing and community – school, local and international. That's the eight frameworks of our strategic plan.*

He does concede that principals are subservient to boards. He explains how these expectations have changed with the corporatisation of boards:

There has been a dramatic drop in the tenure of principals because the corporate world are used to high turnover of CEOs. Board members in schools where a corporate view has been adopted, expect a high turnover of the principal/CEO. We have examples in Australia where they've just said we are not renewing contracts, because they think in the corporate world, you turn over your CEO. I think the average tenure now has hit below five years for the first time.

In drawing parallels with CEOs from the corporate sector, he draws a clear distinction between that role and how the role is enacted in schools.

There is a fine line, what the corporate types on a board don't understand is a principal still has got to be seen, whereas the CEO of a for-profit doesn't have to be seen, even by his own staff. In our schools, people expect to have access to the principal. The CEO of a for-profit never sees a complaint letter, whereas we get them directly, so it is a different sort of role. I am not about day to day matters; I am about tomorrow.

Allan explained to me how his board expect him to be Chief Executive Office and Chief Education Officer.

As Allan reflects upon the role; he introduces a metaphor for leadership in large independent schools:

…the best image that I've got is that of the principal is the ringmaster of the circus. The principal is not the star. The ringmaster's job is to organise the circus, to organise the acts in the appropriate order, the stars are the students and the staff, and we are just the ringmaster. So, our job is to ensure

everything happens smoothly, safely, productively, everyone enjoys it. It's a great show, but the stars are the students and the staff. That's the picture that I have of the Ringmaster. No one should ever remember the Ringmaster.

He has a second metaphor, the conductor of an orchestra, while Allan says you wouldn't find it in the literature, the metaphor has been advanced before (Drucker, 1954):

...you won't find it in the literature, compositional leadership. We are like a conductor; we are not playing the instruments. But it is the principal's job to get the orchestra together and to play beautiful music together. Compositional leadership is to find the right balance between transactional and transformational. It is not sustainable to be in transformational zone managing lots of change all of the time.

In another conception of his role, he sees himself as a *meddling leader:*

I do not operate from the extreme of control and command, nor from the other end of the spectrum, 'the sage on the side', but from the middle, because I like to meddle. So, to me, the meddling leader is our job, to know when to meddle, when to mix and match, when we just have to be the autocrat.

Allan leaves no doubt in my mind that whatever he may be faced with, or dealing with, he is in charge.

I warn people that for any decision, I'll listen to you all, but in the end, there is one person making the decision. Me. We are not a democracy. And I'll make the final call. But the minute you leave the room, there is cabinet solidarity.

He then reflects on the themes of leadership generated from the quantitative research while at the same time acknowledging the demanding nature of the job:

...all of the responsibilities are core leadership. The number of themes of leadership highlight the complexity. You rarely get a quiet time during a school day. That's your role, it's the sudden issue or the crisis or dealing with people or meeting with people or parents or boys or issues. You rarely get time during the working day to have quiet and reflective time.

My reflection: Allan seemed to have the view that his board expected him to be chief education office and chief executive officer; he accepts that he is solely responsible. He knows the role is complex and extensive. There is no room for complacency in Allan's leadership, he communicates his expectations clearly and expects his staff to commit to them. He is a visionary, all about tomorrow in his words. He seems to enjoy the messy process of change and challenges motivate him.

5.2.2.4. Allan's perspectives on principal leadership effectiveness in his context.

Allan was not comfortable talking about whether he was effective or not, indeed he found the concept itself hard to explain. He did say this:

> *...effectiveness is really for the judgement of others. Effectiveness is whether you've had an influence of good for the school and the school is in a good place where boys and parents and staff want to be. Are parents choosing your school? So, I'm saying if their child is at your school and they enjoy it, they like it.....then I am being effective as a principal.*

He is comfortable to be judged on his effectiveness by the outcomes for boys at Founders; he sees this an over-arching responsibility:

> *I think I could be judged as effective if I can turn boys into good citizens – so it's the work I'm doing for the boys in terms of who they become. It's not academic results, it's not sporting results. Did boys enjoy being here, did they enjoy learning, are they good people, will they become men of character?*

> His view about effectiveness in leading independent schools comes down to how … you measure success. He refers to the problematic nature of measuring educational outcomes.

> *I use annual surpluses which indicates an efficient operation; long term cash flow; a robust strategic plan is in place; and survey results from boys, parents and staff that indicate good satisfaction and engagement with the ethos. These are reasonably easy to measure. There are others: academic*

success; co-curricular success; pastoral care and wellbeing; spiritual growth and community engagement. They are far more complex to measure.

Allan had to manage board expectations in this respect, as well:

I had to educate the board on how you measure success in a school where a lot of the things you do in a school can't be measured. You know if you want boys to have a generosity of spirit, you can't measure that. Or boys who are going to be good people, good citizens – you can't measure those things.

Another measure of success which Allan is prepared to be accountable for is - *enrolment demand and enrolment trends*. He keeps an eye on parent and student perceptions of his school to make sure he is meeting expectations, which in turn is linked to enrolment sustainability. *We do surveys of the boys; exit and current surveys. We do parent surveys every year to make sure parents are satisfied.*

Allan explains that the effectiveness of the principal is moderated by the quality of staff.

The quality of staff is the crucial thing for effective leadership in our schools. You've got to get very good senior staff because you can't do it all yourself. I check in with them regularly. I never want to know what their role is, because that's a given. I want to know what the reach is, what are they trying to bring in? What are they trying to change? And then I work with them and meet regularly with them and see them in action.

Allan believes that a criteria for judging the effectiveness of an independent school principal should concentrate on the school culture:

If I was judging effectiveness…… I'd want to find out what the school tone and culture is. I've advised boards when they are choosing for a principal, go spend a day with the applicant in their school. Get a feel for them in their

school. You've got to walk in and observe and get a feel and a tone. How the grounds are looked after.

> *My reflection:* Allan claims that the reputation of the school and the satisfaction levels of boys and parents is a good indicator of his effectiveness. He is comfortable for his effectiveness to be judged by the impact that he has, directly and indirectly, on the morale and welfare of the boys. He believes his effectiveness should be measured by the climate in the school, the tone, the presentation of the campus, the atmosphere that exists.

5.2.2.5. Allan describes how he manages the demands of the role.

When reflecting on the most demanding part of the job, Allan says without hesitation that it is:

> *…managing the complex relationships for the care of the child. Split families, blended families, complex marriages, and access/settlement arguments [and] you've got to have high energy levels and you've got to enjoy what you do, you've got to get a buzz from it otherwise you couldn't sustain the amount of energy and requirements that you need to do the job. That is what we find about principals, so many moan and groan about the complexity of it, but it should energise you, the complexity.*

Managing in the role Allan says requires an inherent commitment to wanting to be a principal: *I always wanted to be involved in making the big decisions, I wanted to be where the decisions were being made; because my natural interest is there – at the heart of deciding the direction of the school.*

Allan claims you can't do the role effectively without the support of competent staff and the skills to effectively delegate responsibility to key staff:

> *You can't do it all and you've got to have good people who you can delegate to and let them go and know what they are doing and mentor/guide them, but you've got to have good people. It doesn't matter how brilliant the principal is, it means nothing if you don't have good staff. My number one priority is getting those right people in the right jobs and then nurturing them, and looking after them. I want people who have a career path because I know they will be motivated to want to do a good job.*

Allan described how the role of principal of a large, independent school is *all consuming; our schools can consume every minute of your day, so you've got to be willing to go and share and talk to colleagues.*

He manages the role by engaging with trusted colleagues. *I find support with good colleagues, the ones who are willing to share and drop their guard. Sometimes it's good to have a small group of colleagues who you can ring and bounce something complex off with them.* To manage Allan argues it is important for the principal to have a resilient outlook and high energy levels. He says, *selection committees don't examine the resilience because you get some really tough times and you've got to have really strong resilience. You've got to not fall for the trap of wanting to be liked.* It was evident during the case study visit in Allan's interactions with me and with others that he uses humour regularly, *our roles are all consuming, our schools can consume every minute of your day. Humour assists, I think humour is vital; I've always used humour. You can use humour to diffuse a situation.* Allan also uses as a means of managing the demands of the role:

> *It is important in this role to look after yourself; our jobs in big schools is very taxing and demanding. Three or four nights a week and all-day Saturday, I have huge demands on me and my time. The only way to cope with this work load is to get quality down time and quiet times where you are not bound to your job.*

My reflection: Allan seems to believe the role to demanding and all consuming. To manage he relies upon trusted colleagues for counsel and support and sustains a resilient and optimistic outlook, and uses humour. He knows he needs high energy levels to perform in the role and this requires looking after himself physically and psychologically.

5.2.2.6. My commentary on Allan's narrative.

Allan was the right fit for Founders. The board played a crucial role in establishing the footing for success by selecting him. Honesty, honour and integrity in leadership are non-negotiable traits that Allan believes in. He sets, demonstrates and expects exacting standards of professionalism, modelling Founder's core values for staff, students and the community alike.

His focus is on the holistic development of students and his mission is to build young men of character. He expects teachers to be committed to students as learners and as people; committed to the development of character as much as academic development. Allan invests a lot of time in managing his board and ensuring they are educated into the governance required in independent schools and going to lengths to see that directors understand the differences between schools and corporations. He is concerned to manage the financial viability of the school by ensuring enrolment levels are sustained and maintained; he knows that with viable enrolments comes viable budgets and financial management.

Allan invests time in people and makes himself available, accessible and approachable. He has many stakeholder groups to manage, reviewing the school's web-site shows that there are many and they have a role to play in the school's community support networks. Every interaction with a staff member, student or stakeholder group is his opportunity to lead. His leadership mission is to constantly seek to do better, to pursue improvement and growth, this drives his leadership activity. There is no room for complacency, he communicates his expectations clearly and expects his staff to commit to them. It can further be inferred that Allan's leadership of Founders has an explicit futures perspective, it is visionary, he is all about tomorrow; honouring the past and plotting the future. He embraces the messy process of change and challenges motivate him. There are boundaries, however, as there is a filter. Allan uses the filter of what is in the best interests of the boys and what enhances their learning, to assess whether a new innovation or idea is actually implemented.

5.2.2.7. Themes to emerge from Allan's case study.

Table 5.2

Themes to Emerge from Allan's Case Study

Categories	Themes
Values and beliefs	The board have to select the right person for the job to establish a successful foundation
	The right person for the job is one who's personal values and belief system is strongly aligned with the school's core philosophy and ethos
	Acting with personal and professional integrity and having moral grit
	Promoting character development in all students and acting in the best interests of students
	Sustaining a broad curriculum and co-curriculum to support the holistic growth and development of students
Conceptions of the role	Responsible for the lot as the CEO and accountable for the school's performance
	Having a mind-set of continuous improvement, constantly thinking about how he, and Founders, can do better
	Being a visionary, thinking and planning strategically, with sights firmly on tomorrow, planning the future
	Challenging the status quo, looking for new opportunities and being comfortable with change
	The principal is in charge with a sharp edge to performance and accountabilities
Perspectives on effectiveness	Ensuring sustainable enrolments to safeguard financial sustainability
	The quality of the outcomes for students and of the broad, holistic learning programs
	The ability to recruit, retain and develop high calibre staff
	Ensuring culture exists where staff are expected to perform, there is a bottom line
	Stakeholder perceptions of the school's performance particularly parents

Managing the demands of the role	Have to want to do the job, and believe in the significance of the work of a principal
	Stamina, resilience, toughness and humour, to cope with the demands and expectations of the role
	Enjoying the role, and being energised by the diversity of the principal's job
	Quality collegial relationships
	Being able to delegate with confidence and share the leadership demands

5.2.3. Narrative – Karen.

5.2.3.1. Scene setting.

Karen has been the Principal of Waterview Grammar School, a non-denominational, co-educational school on the fringe of a state capital city, since 2010. She has had extensive experience in independent schools, and Waterview is her second independent school principalship. Karen is involved in a number of boards and trusts and keenly engaged in professional associations.

The school's foundations were in the 1800's with the move to the current site made some 40 years ago. The school comprises three distinct schools on the main campus and a separate junior school 18 km from the main campus. Waterview has a total enrolment of more than 1,650 students, and there are over 200 staff employed. The total gross annual income in 2015 exceeded $32 million, and from 2009 to 2015 the school invested more than $40 million on capital works.

Governance of Waterview rests with the school board who collectively have responsibility for determining general policy and setting the school's strategic direction. At the time of the research there were 12 directors. Karen is supported in the leadership of the school by an Associate Principal, Head of Senior School, Head of Junior School, Director of Development & Community Relations, ICT Manager, Director of Learning, Director of People and Culture, and Business Manager.

Approaching the school by taxi I was struck by the sheer size of the campus, the extensive gardens, recreational spaces, and buildings. On further inquiry I found out that the school held over 50 hectares (125 acres) of land available for school development. Alighting from the taxi I found my way to reception and to the

principal's office. As Karen took me for a walk around the campus, she spoke enthusiastically about her plans for school improvement. There were visible signs that the campus required refurbishment and attention to the assets and facilities, and at the same time, new projects were underway; I was shown the new hockey fields, a new year 9 program and facilities, and the site for the new sports and aquatic centre which had an estimated cost of $12 million. Karen explained to me that she needed to turn her attention to creating green areas in the school, trees, shrubs and plants, soft areas; she had to turn her attention to creating a green environment. Karen spoke of the 'neglect' of important areas of the campus under the previous regime, reflecting that the previous principal had different priorities and was not able to apply as much effort to this aspect of the school. She was not being critical, but simply acknowledging that principals can have different priorities depending on the life cycle of the school. Her motivation for any new project was to enhance the physical and learning environment for the students; she felt they should have the best.

Karen entered classrooms, and teaching areas, and general precincts without interrupting learning or causing any disruption. She was warmly greeted, and teachers were keen to engage in dialogue with us. Students were genuinely happy to have Karen visit and they were keen to say hello to her. Karen struck a presence of a leader, it was her school and she was in charge. However, as she explained to me, she wanted to lead change with her school community supporting her in her mission to enable her to achieve the very best for all students of Waterview. She was friendly, affable and engaging.

5.2.3.2. Karen's explanation of her values and beliefs.

A clear sense of moral purpose is incredibly important to Karen. During the interview, she returns to her moral purpose as a justification of how she leads at Waterview.

> *Establishing a moral purpose is the most important thing a leader does, and it is all about learning. My moral purpose is that every child can succeed; everything else comes under that. ... every child matters and what matters to me about them is that they feel intact, that they feel intellectually and emotionally safe in schools, that they feel they are getting somewhere with*

their learning, that there is not just more of the same, day after day, year after year, that there is an anticipation of journey and a sense of having succeeded personally at something.

I observed Karen's moral purpose in action when I arrived at the school. Karen was on the phone to a parent of a year 9 boy who had got himself into quite a deal of trouble. Karen explained that this boy's enrolment had been brought into question by her staff, feeling that the boy had reached the limits of the school's patience. Rather than take this approach as the course of action, Karen involved herself and worked to redeem the boy's enrolment.

It would be easy to terminate the boy's enrolment. I am more interested in keeping this boy, addressing his behaviours and turn him around. I don't want to think we can't maintain this boy's enrolment and actually improve his outlook and achievement.

Karen values highly the capacity to keep in mind the big picture, which was also a finding from the quantitative research:

It seems to me that I need to think about the 1,800 people who can be on site every day, and the parents sitting outside of that; and the big picture around all the things to do with them having the resources they need, making sure major risks are mitigated, the bigger picture around finances and having the money to do the things that need to be done with them in our school. My big picture view is a whole of organisation view.

Karen values working with her people and being genuinely collaborative:

If you place value on emotional intelligence and empathy; then you are actually listening to people. If you are emotionally intelligent you value people and you want to work with people to bring out the best in them, which results in a community of learners working together for a common purpose.

While she delegates responsibility for curriculum, teaching and learning, Karen believes that the quality of teaching and learning is her responsibility:

Instructional leadership has to be in any model of leadership for principals, it is important to me. You have to be all those models of leadership that you read about. It is bit like a really good teacher, a really good teacher has a toolkit, and you pull things out as you need them.

Karen is a firm believer that schools should operate in the same way as corporations; and she is comfortable for this to be the operational model at Waterview:

> *It is important to understand how governance works and how the relationship between the CEO and the school board works. We don't talk about profitability, but we talk about sustaining the business, what are the drivers of the business.*

My reflection: Karen holds a compelling purpose that every child can succeed, and this underpins her values and beliefs. She is a futures thinker and keeps in mind the big picture as she consider her school's future. She values being collaborative in her leadership approach.

5.2.3.3. Karen describes her conception of the role.

Karen sees herself as CEO, no different from the role conception in the corporate world. *We are CEO's. We have to look at ourselves in this way*. And as CEOs do in the not-for-profit corporate world, Karen knows it is her role to plan the school's future and its sustainability.

> *I think about the sustainability of the school a lot, we have a rapidly growing demographic, we have enrolments now, but in ten years-time it might not be there. Sustainability is being realistic about how we spend money and our debt.*

Karen knows that it is her job to ensure the school's future and to see that plans are made now for that:

> *…thinking ahead, we have got burgeoning numbers, what are the facilities like, what do I need for kids, do I have enough space, am I going to run out of room. I am thinking a lot about staff wellbeing, staff conditions, their professional development, what am I going to need? We have got all of these learning initiatives, what are they going to be, how do I grow teachers as leaders, how am I growing that? I need money for that, how am I going to achieve that?*

Karen believes one of her core roles is to provide and sustain holistic learning for the students of Waterview:

Independent schools provide children with values, religion, social justice, social service. You can give kids opportunities outside of just sitting in the classroom. They get some idea about what it is to be human, and what it is to be a creative human, and how magical that can be, through drama, sport, and music. To be intellectually fit, to be emotionally fit, to be aesthetically aware, this is where independent schools provide so much opportunity.

Her focus on holistic learning extends naturally to the pedagogical leadership of the school:

I am interested in teachers becoming a lot more objective and professional in their work. I need them to take leadership around what they are doing and around their learning, and not just teaching; that takes a lot of doing to get people into that space.

Kids need leadership from their teacher, and they need quite explicit leadership. If I am saying that every child matters, you've got to be curious, and you've got to be puzzled, and you've got to see extended growth in kids, and if you don't know how to do it, you go looking for it. My job is to get them into this space where they can find their own solutions and where they take a kid on a learning journey by reflecting on the needs of the child. It is the same thing for teachers as it is for kids, learning growth is really important.

Karen also sees herself as the instructional leader:

At Waterview, I felt that it was really important, and I became quite deeply involved in that. I felt I should establish it as a priority and so I was explicit about what I wanted. If the academic outcomes aren't what they should be, then the principal should get involved. Whether you are doing the leading or someone else is doing the leading, if you go into a school as a principal and you don't know how to lead the teaching and learning, you have to learn how to do it. You still have to know what quality instruction looks like and you have got to be paying attention to curriculum and learning.

Karen explained how she spends a lot of her time building and managing relationships:

Listening to people, collaborating, is really important, it takes a lot of time, and you will have people disagree with you, but you just go along and deal with that. It is more important that you spend the time collaborating. We have an executive team, I know, but we bring other people in. We have an effective learning team that also meets. At times I will want to bring other groups of people together, for a purpose. [And] applying time and effort to listening to people individually and collectively ensures you are actually understanding what they are saying. I think my job is listening, probably first and foremost my job is listening, and then my job is asking the right question, so those two things to me are incredibly important – so that covers off on any situation at any time. Listening, asking questions, but it is also observing, we have become pretty acute at observing things.

The relationships with her parents, caring for their collective wellbeing and helping her community develop an affinity with the school is also an important aspect of Karen's role:

I need to think about the wellbeing of parents and parent learning. We have had to move parents along about what it means to have a contemporary education, every event we have I try and explain how we do things differently to their day, it is quite carefully crafted and quite strategic in that sense. I have to do quite a bit of parent education and I value it highly; we have had to gradually move our parents to where we want them to be. I do a lot of writing and speaking, and these are important parts of my role.

Parents as stakeholders are important to Karen but she has a management plan for parent groups:

When I came to Waterview there were lots of groups of parents, lots of them. I decided we would have one parent body, with sub-groups, just one over-arching parent body. It has taken about five years and it is going to take a while longer to get it established.

Reflecting on the findings of the quantitative research in this thesis as it pertained to the themes of leadership and expectations held for independent school principals by boards, Karen commented:

I can't see anything missing from the set of expectations. This is the role. You look at something like this, it can be a bit unwieldy to be honest, but that is my job. This will differ from school to school, too, but I know in some schools, the religious and spiritual dimension of the principal's work is much higher up the list, and can actually over-ride everything else in the school, which I think is a problem.

... This might not be a popular thing to say, you have to have a good business head, these days. A good business head, not just around the numbers, but around what the numbers mean, how you achieve them. The one business indicator that I watch – different in a for-profit businesses, is enrolments. Watching the enrolment numbers is a very important part of my futures thinking.

My reflection: Karen seemed to be focused on leading pedagogy, and instruction, she is aware of her role to supervise and monitor the quality of instruction occurring in classrooms. She wants to run her school like a CEO, fully responsibility for all aspects of the business. And she knows it is her role to build a community of supporters, educate and develop parents so they are committed to the school.

5.2.3.4. Karen's perspectives on principal leadership effectiveness in her context.

Karen is comfortable for her effectiveness to be judged by the learning growth she can achieve for her students:

…it is linked to the value we are adding to kids, and kids' development. The measure would be about the value that the school and or the principal is adding to the student's growth. Is the student's capacity for learning growing, are they being successful at learning in your school?

Another measure, according to Karen, is the growth and development that she is able to achieve in her people:

I think the best measure of effectiveness is the growth in people. The power of the individual stories and then the aggregation of these can tell you how well you are going. The stories tell you how effective you have been.

[And] *my effectiveness as a leader is completely dependent on other people, and if I can't collaborate with them and I don't listen, I will never succeed with my purpose, ever. Leaders striving forward cannot solve issues on their own. I have to lead the way. I am involved in anything that I expect my staff to be involved in. Being effective involves lots of conversations.*

Effectiveness in the role is unquestionably linked to performance in realising the school's mission, according to Karen:

You have to be clear about what is important and what matters. You have to be clear about your purpose. Being open to new ideas, and to most importantly realising that if you don't build your team, you will never do it, you will be working day and night. Clarity of purpose and vision enables the principal and the school to reflect on growth and development and movement toward the desirable place the schools wants to be.

Karen's board use KPIs to judge her performance and she is comfortable with this. She explains the mandate that her board gave to her when she started at Waterview:

…significant attention to the fabric of the school. The school was very tired, and not well looked after, a bit unkept in some ways, beautiful culture, lovely kids etc, not a lot of attention given, or paid to the maintenance of rooms and buildings, landscaping, paths, roads and parking, traffic flows. So, I had to turn my attention to that, and the board expected me to.

Karen is also comfortable with quantifiable measures such as enrolment data to judge her effectiveness.

One of my KPIs is growth in enrolments. You have to keep an eye on the margins, on the ratios, the financial ratios which tell you how well you are performing. I watch the enrolment numbers carefully. It is discretionary if

you send your kids to an independent school. So, we have to be watching to see what is effecting our parents' capacity to pay the fees. If I see patterns of people leaving, I want to know why they are leaving.

I asked Karen to think about judging the effectiveness of a colleague and she said:

I would want to see them in a variety of situations, questioning and observing. I guess I would assess their effectiveness by constructing a conversation with that person, hopefully after each observation, the way in which I would construct it would, I noticed this, and I noticed that, and what I would be aiming to do is to get some self-reflection out of them. I think reflection is an important part of being effective.

My reflection: Karen is comfortable to have her effectiveness judged by the value that her school adds to each student as a learner. She explained how the effectiveness of the principal can be judged by the fabric of the school, the appearance of the school, presentation and tone of the students. She uses the metric of a sustainable enrolment base and ensuring the future viability of the school.

5.2.3.5. Karen describes how she manages the demands of the role.

The most demanding aspect of the role from Karen's perspective –

Work load! It is a problem for principals in independent schools. I don't find anything hard or really difficult, I find my work is interesting, it just takes time. For me, the demanding part of the job is the hours of work, it is the long hours.

Karen reflects on a general day, to highlight the demands that she is required to manage; and these can vary widely depending upon the evening commitments.

Generally, I would be here from 8am, might leave, if I don't have anything on, somewhere between five and six, and that would just depend on whether I want to get to a gym class. The work I leave for home is the easy stuff, working through emails. I might start at 8 o'clock at night and then work until about 9 o'clock doing the easy things. Yesterday (Sunday) I did a couple

of hours, writing an assembly speech and writing a paper. Most weeks I will have two or three nights where I have a school event or a school function.

She attests to how hard it is to manage the work load of an independent school principal and theorises about managing in an ideal world:

If I could make my work load lighter, I'd become more like a CEO and have a chief operating officer under me. You don't do anything with the learning, you have KPIs and expect others to do the work and judging them by the KPIs. I wouldn't like this type of role; I don't know how you can be the principal and not turn up to events and be involved. I don't know any other way to make it easier, than to adopt a more corporate model.

To manage the complexity of the role, Karen had to attend to her own professional learning to ensure she had the knowledge, qualities and skills to enact the role:

I had to educate myself to bring myself to the CEO role. I wanted to develop my business sense, so I did lots of self-education around that. Then most recently I completed the Australian Institute of Company Director's course. I haven't pursued another degree, my preference was to learn through short courses. I made myself learn financial acumen.

Particular personal qualities and attributes have enabled Karen to manage the demands of the role:

… it is not that you need to be a hard nut, particularly, but you need to be prepared to be courageous and take some steps if the lines are crossed. I think, just, being a successful human being is about perseverance [and] *you have to be conscious that the principal sets the tone, it has to bring you joy and happiness, otherwise you will be burdened and stressed, and you will affect others with that.*

Drawing on the collegial support of other people helps Karen manage in the role:

It takes an acceptance that you don't know everything, and that another principal can help you with that, or someone else can help. Being open to others, thinking about other ideas and trying to understand how things can

be done better. I use all sorts of people for their expertise, consultants,
lawyers, I recognise the expertise I need and go looking for it.

> *My reflection:* Karen it seems knows that she has to look after herself and attend to
> her physical and psychological health to manage the demands of the role. She
> knows hard work and collegial support is needed to manage and she is prepared to
> make the commitment to herself and her colleagues. Karen knows her own
> disposition positively influences others.

5.2.3.6. My commentary on Karen's narrative.

Karen is driven by her purpose; that she wants every child to succeed, every
child matters. She expects her staff to fully commit to this purpose and build
meaningful relationships with every child and young adult to enhance their holistic
development. Karen wants her teachers to do more than teach subjects, she wants
them to teach children, to build the self-concept and identity of every student they
teach.

She is a leader committed to dialogue, effective dialogue, to help her plan the
future for Waterview. Karen is a capable and confident leader, she can set the future
for Waterview, she has the skills and capacities to lead from the front, yet she
chooses to be inclusive, to be collaborative and consultative and to build community
alignment and engagement with the vision, this is her style. When Karen was
appointed to Waterview she could see a school that needed an over-haul, an injection
of energy and spirit, and significant investment in the fabric of the school. Karen
knows it is her job to ensure the sustainability and viability of the school; and she
accepts accountability for this.

She runs the school as a CEO and as a business and knows meeting key
benchmarks is part of her accountability to the board. One of the key benchmarks set
with her board was to sustain viable enrolment numbers. Karen tracks the
enrolments, reviews the data and uses key metrics to understand parent and
community perceptions of her school.

5.2.3.7. Themes to emerge from Karen's case study.

Table 5.3

Themes to Emerge from Karen's Case Study

Categories	Themes
Values and beliefs	A clear moral purpose that is student centred, believing that all children can learn and be successful
	Collaboration, consultation and listening is at the heart of Karen's leadership
	Strategic thinking and being futures focused is Karen's mind-set
	Taking a corporate view of schools as businesses and knowing she needs the acumen to make the right decisions
Conceptions of the role	Changing parent perspectives and educating parents about the school's purposes
	Instructional and pedagogical leadership as core aspects of her role
	Being a visionary, building the school's future
	Creating and sustaining holistic programs for students
	Being the CEO, managing the school's financial resources and assets, holding considerable business acumen, to run a large business
	Managing the complex relationships in school especially parents as partners
Perspectives on effectiveness	Learning growth in children and young adults
	Learning growth in adults
	Growing a sustainable enrolment base and ensuring the future viability of the school
	Trusting relationships are at the heart of effective leadership

	Achieving the school's mission and purposes
	The fabric of the school
Managing the demands of the role	Having energy levels for the role and attending to her own learning, growth and development
	Having requisite personal attributes: emotional intelligence, resilience, perseverance, persistence, and courage
	Being up-beat and positively influencing the tone of the school

5.2.4. Narrative – Karleen.

5.2.4.1. Scene setting.

Karleen has been the Principal of Centenary Girls School, a faith-based capital city girls' school, since 2007. Karleen has significant experience in independent schools, and Centenary is her second independent school principalship. Prior to this appointment, she was the Principal of Upward Girls School for 10 years. She is actively involved in educational and business professional associations and sits on several education boards.

Established in the early 1900s, Centenary is an inner-city capital city school with five separately managed sub-schools on the one campus, each with their own distinct precinct. The school has an enrolment of more than 2,000 students, a boarding house for 120 students, and more than 350 staff. The total gross annual income in 2015 exceeded $60 million, and in the period from 2009 to 2015, the school spent over $75 million on capital works.

Governance of Centenary is the responsibility of a not-for-profit board that works with Karleen to determine the strategic direction for the school and monitors the school's operations to ensure the effective management of its affairs and ongoing viability. Karleen has delegated responsibility for the day to day management and operation of the school. At the time of the case study research the board had eight directors, who act in a voluntary capacity and bring a variety of professional skills and experience to the service of the school. Karleen is supported by six senior

executives: Deputy Principal; Dean of Students; Dean of Curriculum Innovation; General Manager; Director (Finance); and Director (Human Resources).

When I arrived at Centenary for the case study visit, and entered the main gates to the school, I was immediately struck by the sheer size of the school and the impressive campus. The school has 20 hectares (50 acres) of beautiful park-like grounds which were well kept and neatly presented. It was a pleasant and inspiring 250 m drive from the main gates to the administration building where Karleen's office was housed. On stepping from my car, I was offered a warm and friendly greeting by the many girls who were sitting on lawns adjacent to the administration block, enjoying their break.

Karleen's greeting was generous and affable. We sat down to coffee and cake and spent the initial time familiarising ourselves with the purposes of my visit. The General Manager (GM) showed me around the school; giving me the opportunity to engage with him about the role of GM, a role that is rare in independent schools. A tour of the school had to be achieved in a motorised golf cart, it simply couldn't be achieved on foot in any reasonable time frame.

As we drove about the school I observed how well-presented the girls were, they were wearing their uniforms well, their hair styles were neat and conservative, and it was clear that the school had expectations around uniform. They were relaxed and comfortable to say hello and chat. The climate in the school was uplifting, I felt like I was in a special place of learning. The grounds, gardens, footpaths and buildings were immaculately presented. There were obvious signs of campus development and new capital projects, seamlessly built amongst older buildings, which have been neatly refurbished and renovated to a contemporary standard. As we drove about the campus I was struck by the magnitude of the oversight and supervision that is required to maintain the campus in the first-class condition I found it.

As I spent time with Karleen I was able to observe her interacting with her support and operational staff, parents and visitors to reception, and students who presented to meet with senior staff. Even though they were not in the reception area to meet Karleen, she went out of her way to interact with them, offering a warm and friendly greeting, with a smile, and asking them something about themselves.

Karleen displayed a joyful interest in the girls and young women who came into her presence. It was evident to me that Karleen had stature and was afforded significant respect.

5.2.4.2. Karleen's explanation of her values and beliefs.

Karleen opened the interview by discussing how critical it was that alignment exists between the principal's own values and beliefs and the school-wide values:

Without alignment, the board and community are going to say, you're not the person we need to lead. The recruitment consultant and the council were seeking a principal who was the right fit to take the school forward in its next phase of development, at that point in the school's history. The selection committee were clear about the person they were seeking, discarding unsuitable applicants, working through the list of suitable candidates until they were confident that I was the right fit.

Karleen believes that having a shared vision and working together to achieve the vision are important aspects of the principal's role:

In 2012 we carried out a whole of school consultative process with the intent to clarify the vision of who Centenary wanted to be, and where they wanted to be in 2020. Everything we do here, relates to the strategic vision. My KPIs and all of my goals for the year are developed from the vision. All of our professional learning has to be aligned with our vision and our goals. Having that big picture as the key driver actually makes the process quite easy.

Being aspirational and holding high expectations is particularly important to Karleen for her context at Centenary:

I am never content to just stop with well done. It's always, how can we work smarter, how can we have done that better? So, the whole reflective cycle as part of being aspirational and never just being comfortable, is really important. Nobody can afford to just do the same thing that they did the year before. Are we the best that we can be? At Centenary, staff can't hang onto old style pedagogy and that type of thinking, it is not relevant anymore.

Karleen said that she ensures Centenary invests in the professional development and training of staff to ensure that they can meet the high performance expectations she has for them:

> *The investment made in the professional learning of our staff is exceptional and incomparable. We budget for half a million dollars a year and we seek best practice learning. This in turn leads to new and innovative approaches to learning, and more importantly in our understanding of how each student learns and what will best suit her.*

> *My reflection:* The qualities and values that Karleen gives emphasis to are the ones she thinks the school needs from her. While she acknowledges that constant change can be stressful, she doesn't shy away from the need to change and to embrace change. She said you can't stagnate against a broader educational climate that is constantly evolving. Karleen wants every student to be successful.

5.2.4.3. Karleen describes her conception of the role.

Karleen was clear about her role; she is *accountable for everything. There's nothing, nothing that I am not responsible for*. The role of an independent school principal is multi-faceted, according to Karleen:

> *I have significant areas that I delegate to others, however, I need to be at the education symposium where the minister and the secretary are talking about the direction of education. I'm the one that's interested in developments in Finland, so I see my role as scanning the global educational focus area, and then providing and engaging with my specific team around our alignment with the international and national agenda. I delegate particular responsibilities to the executive team, but I have oversight of everything.*

Karleen said that a core part of her leadership was to sustain enrolment numbers and the risk if you don't do this, is, *you have to make staff cuts. Or make*

temporary appointments, 12-month contracts. This is part of leadership, to ensure a viable enrolment base which is an important business performance indicator.

Karleen professes that you have got to be adaptable to what the community needs, she called it *agility and nimbleness* in leadership which allowed her to read the landscape and respond accordingly:

> *The capacity to think beyond the current in everything you do. Where would we be in five years if we go down that path? How would the students react to that? That contemplative questioning space is something that I'm in all the time. Every single day. So, having that capacity to challenge, to think beyond, to sometimes be the devil's advocate. Change can't be successful unless you have everyone on board, which is why I purposefully involve the whole community. Good management, as well as contemplative leadership, is required to be effective, in one's stewardship of a school.*

She explained how a change of school council chair after five years brought differences to the way she would perform in the role:

> *The new chair had a different way of doing things. The old way of doing things was to celebrate the heritage, make sure you don't change things too much. The Bursar, Director of Finance back in those days, managed the operations of the school. With the appointment of a different chair of council, my role changed completely, to become one of CEO.*

Karleen described a time in independent schools when:

> *…the director of finance might have managed the capital projects with the finance committee. This is no longer the case; the school council now holds the principal accountable. The buck stops with me; the new chairman expects that of me and so do the Council.*

Karleen sees leading the culture of Centenary as one of her core responsibilities; and she does this through modelling and dialogue.

> *I evaluate every proposal from the staff, every single one against how it fits with the culture of the school. When I was appointed, there were no visible school values. Centenary now has five school values embedded in our*

practices and understood by all in the community. We know who we are and where we are going; based upon values.

Karleen knows that in large, independent schools, like Centenary, leadership must be shared, and distributed across the layers of the school. *Your senior executive are absolutely critical. I think if you are the one focused on the strategy and then you've got your staff being the disciples of that, it will work. But you can't do it on your own. You can't do it all yourself. So, having great people sitting with you is absolutely critical to the process.* While she shares leadership responsibility, staff are expected to perform:

> *The staff here know that I don't accept mediocrity. They know that if there is poor performance, it will be addressed, and they know I will move staff on if they aren't performing against our culture. The well-being of the kids is at stake if staff don't perform. It comes back to what is best for the kids, and there is no compromising that. There is no place for complacency in our schools.*

Karleen sees a natural part of her role is to care for people, to nurture all in her community:

> *It is my job to support them, to guide them, to problem solve with them and ultimately to protect the welfare of all. I provide support for staff as individuals, looking after their personal and professional wellbeing, particularly when the demands of the profession and the challenge of maintaining a work/life balance provoke difficulties for employees of the school. At another level I have responsibility to the broader school community, and specifically to the students, to ensure we have a safe community.*

When describing her role as a people manager, Karleen does not refer to the more than 2,000 students or nearly 400 staff, she talks about, *6,000 members of the community*, that she is responsible for every day.

I saw the care ethic in action during the case study visit. Just prior to my arrival at the school Karleen had to deal with a serious student matter, one where the student's welfare was clearly at risk. Rather than delegate this matter to her executive team, which could normally be the course of action in large independent

schools, Karleen chose to take this matter personally to hand. She knew that her experience and knowledge would be valuable in this situation. *I had a serious child protection matter and I knew I couldn't delegate this, I had to involve myself personally and ensure the best outcome and the highest levels of care were provided to the student.*

Karleen sees a crucial part of her role is to communicate regularly and effectively with her community to keep them engaged in the school.

> *If you communicate consistently and clearly, you achieve engagement. When the challenging decisions are to be made, it is helpful to draw on social capital. What I've learned from 2015 is the importance of communicating with our stakeholders so that they are in the journey with us. Giving them their opportunity to have their say has led to a clearer direction as we move forward.*

Karleen talks about the important part of her role as the custodian of the reputation of the school. The council expect her *...to protect the reputation of the school in the public arena. This brings with it considerable media management skills and public relations savvy.*

My reflection: Karleen knows Centenary is a large business entity and she accepts responsibility for the school's performance in all areas. She has exacting levels of accountability on herself and holds her staff accountable in turn. She values care and commitment to her community.

5.2.4.4. Karleen's perspectives on principal leadership effectiveness in her context.

Defining effectiveness in Karleen's context is quite difficult, she says:

> *It doesn't matter what you think is effective, if the majority of your community don't believe you are effective, what is the point? So, I think you've got to be clear around what is it you want to be measured by. It is up to your community to decide if you are effective. Ultimately, we (independent school principals) are, accountable to our community. What is a reasonable benchmark that you're prepared to live by?*

Karleen adds that you need good data before you can judge someone's effectiveness, because it is contextual.

What we want to know at Centenary is not the same that a competitor wants to know, or a regional school wants to know. So, it's having a breadth of data to ensure you are meeting the needs of what is important to your school. I think the board perception of the job you're doing and what they are actually measuring is also really important.

Thinking more deeply about the concept; Karleen suggests that her performance should be judged against how she performs in the critical aspects of her role:

People manager, relationship manager, empathy and support, [human] *crisis management, being present for those in the community that need care and compassion, sympathetic, empathetic, being a good listener, taking that down to the network of parents who have cooked meals for families in crisis.*

Any assessment of effectiveness must be evaluated against the expectations set by the school council on behalf of the school community, according to Karleen.

I think if you've got a robust, healthy, open relationship with your chair and the board, you can really do anything. Even if you're not necessarily aligned, if you are astute enough to read the signs, you can move into that space. There first has to be alignment with your board and particularly your chair.

Karleen is comfortable to have her effectiveness judged by the school's mission to be a world leader in girls' education - *my position at Centenary is that we are world leaders. That is our positioning, and if we are going to be in that space, there's got to be people that aren't comfortable.*

> *My reflection:* Karleen believes she is effective when she knows what is required, set by the board and community, and then having the leadership astuteness to realise the expectations. She claims she must respond to context and situation, and develop plans and actions based upon what is agreed. She says she needs to listen effectively to her community, understand their needs and respond appropriately.

5.2.4.5. Karleen describes how she manages the demands of the role.

Karleen said the role will dominate your life if you don't manage it:

The job absolutely wears you down. My effectiveness is related to my energy levels. It is the sheer volume of work that is the issue. It is very hard to find the time in your week to be able to spend quality time thinking 'big picture'. If you want to be principal in a large independent school, don't expect a reasonable work/life balance because you just can't get it. I think when you are in this job, expect that it is going to dominate your life and if you accept that at the front end of the game, you can work with that, but don't expect to have a good work/life balance.

And how does she find the energy?

The thing I love about my job is the diversity. I really love the fact that in any one day I will have had a great exchange with my HR person, I will have visited prep and said good morning to the little ones, I will have had the chat along the way to the principal of languages – it's the diversity of the role that really energises me.

To add to this, Karleen understands research suggests that the effective principal is visible, accessible, and available, yet this priority competes with the sheer work load.

It is an absolute tension. The feedback from my community is that I am not visible enough. I understand that, but if you look at my diary, I'm here at the latest at 7 am every morning. On average, probably, three days per week, I will be here until 9.30 pm at night. I have Saturday sport, every Saturday. We have Saturday events here at the school as well which I am expected to attend. Sundays, because we have boarders, we have Sunday events. I come to work every Saturday because my in-tray and my to-do list has got to be cleared before I can start a new week.

Humility is an important trait according to Karleen and being comfortable with vulnerability - *humility is an important part of our makeup, so too modesty, robustness and resilience. Having a thick skin but not being insensitive either.*

My Reflection: Karleen identifies with qualities that she knows she needs - resilience, robustness, modesty, ample humility; and having a thick skin. And she appreciates that principals of large, independent schools in Australia have limited tenure which means she devotes herself completely to the role.

5.2.4.6. My commentary on Karleen's narrative.

Karleen works in a high-performance culture, which is set by the board. The board expect her to perform and deliver on key imperatives that they set. In turn, she has the same expectation of her staff, and will act if staff are not aligned with the central mission and core strategies. Her bottom line is providing an education and climate where all girls can succeed. This was the case with all of the case study principals; their determination to create a climate where all students can succeed. Karleen's context was different, her school is one that competes in the international student market and their product has to be highly desirable in that context.

While Karleen understands the demands of her role, her leadership of Centenary is underscored by human leadership, supporting and caring for her people, building relationships and engaging deeply with all in her community, and leading with a compassionate heart. This sometimes creates a tension for her, where she is required to be decisive and act in the best interests of the girls, resulting in conflict with staff. To resolve this tension, she turns to her moral purpose, to provide a world class education for the girls of Centenary. Karleen is able to move seamlessly between the expectations of a CEO drawn from the corporate world and the timeless expectation of the school principal as human and educational leader.

5.2.4.7. Themes to emerge from Karleen's case study.

Table 5.4

Themes to Emerge from Karleen's Case Study

Categories	Themes

Values and beliefs	Ensuring alignment between the principal's values and qualities, and the board's expectations of the principal
	The principal being the right person for the job
	Being aspirational for the community, wanting to be a world leader in education
	Student centred-leadership by shaping a vision of success for all students
	Building staff capacity and to deliver a world class education
Conceptions of the role	Stretching community aspirations
	Accepting that the school is a large business and adopting a corporate view of the enterprise, principal as CEO and accountable for the lot
	Challenging entrenched practices and behaviours and holding all accountable for the achievement of the vision
	Leading and managing change, leading cultural change and improvement
	Protecting and enhancing the reputation of the school in the wider community, by maintaining affirming public relations
	Sustaining enrolment numbers
	Managing the complex web of relationships and expectations that are the fabric of the school, providing an ethic of care to a large community
Perspectives on effectiveness	Accomplishing a high quality, world class education for all girls
	How successfully relationships are managed and the welfare of the community
	Achieving excellence in all areas of school operations
	How effective teachers are and how finely they are aligned to the school's priorities
	Distributing leadership and sharing leadership to build leadership density and capacity
	Stakeholders and community decide the principal's effectiveness
	Judged by your performance in the role and how well you meet board and community expectations
Managing the demands of the role	A set of helpful personal characteristics - high energy levels, emotional intelligence; being adaptive, agile and flexible; having stamina and resilience to see things through the desired end
	Holding a love for the role and a passion for the job

5.3. Cross Case Analysis: Emerging Themes

The themes that emerged from each of the individual cases have been reviewed and analysed and grouped into categories of themes. These themes then appear as emerging themes from across the cases (see Table 5.5) and are discussed in Chapter 6 where the research findings are discussed.

Table 5.5

Themes to Emerge from Across the Cases

Theme	Adam	Allan	Karen	Karleen
Context	leading effectively requires the principal to understand and read correctly the school's context	a strong alignment between the personal values and belief system of the principal and the school's core philosophy and ethos should exist	the school is a corporation and must meet corporate governance requirements	a corporate view of large independent schools as businesses and the principal as CEO are required
	the principal must be agile and adaptive to the school's changing context, being responsive to contingencies and situations	the foundation for an effective principalship is set when the right person is appointed	large schools are businesses and astuteness and judgement are needed to make the right decisions	effective principal leadership is underpinned by the successful interplay between the principal's values and school-wide values
	similarities to a CEO are evident	shouldering responsibility as a CEO and being accountable for the school's performance	independent school principals are CEO's running large businesses	alignment between the principal's values, the board and community expectations are important
Moral purpose	holding high aspirations for all and transforming the community	all students will be successful, and all students are capable of learning	leadership has a strong moral dimension built around purpose, values, and beliefs	shaping a vision of success for all students based on high standards
	all students will be successful, by holding high expectations of staff and student achievement	focused on student-centred values and holistic learning	student centred, focusing on each and every student, believing that all children can learn and be successful learners	being aspirational for the community, wanting to be a world leader in education
Leading self	being actively involved in professional learning, and professional associations	personal and professional integrity are required and must be modelled	actively involved in professional associations of principals and schools	ongoing professional learning and self-reflection and self-evaluation is required
	a range of specific personal and professional qualities are required	stamina, resilience and toughness, to cope with the demands and expectations of the role	emotional intelligence, empathy, courage and resilience required	adaptable, agile and flexible, responding to challenges with

				courage to disrupt the status quo, humility and modesty
Leading the community	building community, connecting deeply with people in the community	perpetuating and endorsing an ethic of care across the whole community	building trusting relationships especially with parents as key stakeholders	managing the complex web of relationships and expectations that are the fabric of the school, providing an ethic of care
	enabling others to act by engaging and working with them as partners	building a professional, caring, and supportive school community of teachers and other professional staff	building a professional learning community, a community of learners, by telling stories and sharing narratives	engaging with all levels of the community, working together, listening and giving voice to people
Image management	having a school with a strong reputation that is actively sought by families	protecting the school's heritage, celebrating the past and preserving important cultural foundations	being up-beat and influencing others positively to ensure a positive school culture	protecting and enhancing the reputation of the school in the wider community
	sustaining and nurturing a sharp value proposition, why parents choose the school	ensuring the story 'students of promise into adults of substance' is visible for all to see	effective communication, inspiring optimism and hope in others	maintaining affirming public relations through effective marketing strategies
Futures orientation	keep in mind the big picture, thinking strategically, looking past the immediate and planning the future for the school, 25 years hence	being a visionary, thinking and planning strategically, with sights firmly on tomorrow, planning the future	planning the future by strategic thinking and being futures focused	keeping in mind the big picture and maintaining a clear futures focus; leading and managing change
	growing a sustainable enrolment base and ensuring the future viability of the school	leading improvement, innovation and change, challenging the status quo	growing a sustainable enrolment base and ensuring the future viability of the school	envisioning the future, being futures focused, building a legacy for generations to come
Relationship with the board	engaging effectively with the board for growth and improvement	managing and educating the board who have a corporate view	understanding governance and how corporations work is necessary	relationship with the board chair is crucial and managing the expectations of the chair

	having an effective partnership with the school board and the chair	understanding the board's expectations and meeting these	working productively with the school board for the benefit of the school	effectiveness will ultimately be judged by how well the expectations of the board are met
Leading the organisation	managing the school's full operational requirements	focusing on the quality of the instructional program, teaching and learning	ensuring a safe and supportive learning and physical environment for staff and students	constantly striving for improvement, seeking excellence in all areas of school operations
	ensuring that all students are provided with a safe and supporting learning and physical environment	sustaining a broad curriculum and co-curriculum to support the holistic growth and development of students	creating and sustaining broad programs for holistic student development	accepting that the school is a large business and adopting a corporate view of the enterprise, principal as CEO and accountable for the lot
	managing the Church and providing Christian leadership to the whole community	maintaining and sustaining viable enrolments	growing a sustainable enrolment base	maintaining enrolment numbers
Leading staff	developing others, purposefully sharing and distributing leadership	building capacity in others, delegating and sharing leadership	Responsible is for the quality of instruction that occurs in every classroom	teacher development is fundamental to success; quality teachers and quality teaching is the anchor for successful student outcomes
	lead learning and ensuring that learning is a focus for all staff	recruiting, retaining and developing high calibre staff, ensuring that all staff benefit from continuing professional learning	cultivating leadership and capacity in teachers and other adults, nurturing teachers as leaders	distributing leadership and sharing leadership - leading teacher development and ongoing teacher learning

5.4. Nuanced Differences Across the Cases

Chapter 6 discusses the findings from the research study in response to the research questions and sub-questions, using an in-depth cross case analysis of the four cases. In chapter 6 the major concepts and sub-concepts to emerge from the research are presented. There were nuanced differences that emerged across the cases for some of the core concepts of principal leadership and these are discussed and analysed here.

Table 5.6

Differences in Context and Qualities across the Cases

Concept	Adam	Allan	Karen	Karleen
Contextual factors	Controls the board	Controls the board	Collegial board	Board control
	Delegated authority	Delegated authority	Delegated authority as CEO	Authority delegated through KPIs
	Relatively inert past student's association	Manages his influential past student's association	Relatively inactive past student's association	Powerful past student's association
What motivates them?	Farming background, his family were aspirational on his behalf	His roots are in rural Australia; he connects with the under-dog	Strong views about equity and access to education, and about social justice.	Parents invest in Centenary and want a return on that investment
Purpose	I want to transform this community	Grow boys into men of substance and character	Provide the best opportunity for every child to succeed	Every student can be successful
Self-leadership	Networking keenly with colleagues and principal associations, active in the CEO Institute and AIM, as	Turns to colleagues for support	Turns to principal associations, AIM, AICD	Does not turn to principal colleagues, rather, turns to associations of CEOs and AICD

	well as serving on boards			
Presence	Visible and accessible, routinely left the office to engage with students and staff	Every interaction mattered and would move about the school routinely to boost these	Deliberately worked with small and large groups of teachers and students, while resolving the tension of appointments	Intense appointment schedule meant much leadership was enacted from her office
Leading staff	Achievement, results based culture of staff development. He seeks to see staff individual development plans produce results	Relationships are the key, knowing each staff member personally	Leads in a more direct way, getting personally involved in all of the discussions around teacher development and teaching and learning	Direct and personal support, looking out for personal and professional wellbeing

Contextual factors – in autonomous, independent schools, significant stakeholders, boards and past students' associations, for example, influence the principal's autonomy and authority. Karen enjoys a collegial relationship with her board which gives her independence to lead and manage as she sees appropriate and to do so with self-confidence. Adam and Allan have been able to educate their boards and build trust and confidence in their leadership so they too can enjoy relative independence from the board. While enjoying autonomy they do understand accountability and the importance of good communication and consultation. Karleen has a different context, a board that demands high levels of accountability through tighter controls and performance indicators. Karleen is more dependent upon her board for her autonomy to lead and manage.

Motivation – it becomes apparent to me that their own background and philosophies developed during their formative years motivate them. Adam and Allan's background and formative years as men and educators clearly shapes their motives and purpose. Karleen finds her motivation from a more corporate understanding, parents pay high fees and expect a return, her business perspective means she has a responsibility to deliver. Karen's own social justice and conscience drives her to sustain holistic programs giving all students access to learning and personal development.

Purpose – the primary motivating purpose for each case is borne from what motivates them and their context. Karen – social justice; Karleen – duty bound to ensure all students succeed; Adam – aspirational at a social conscience level; and Allan – his responsibility to serve society by providing outstanding men.

Self-leadership – reflects their context and their view of their own role. Three of the four seek corporate associations in their mix of leadership influences; reflecting their own conception of their role and the skills required to lead in a large business. Allan on the other hand, a very experienced principal and self-assured in his role, is comfortable to seek collegial support from trusted colleagues.

Presence – charismatic leadership (Conger, 1999; Goldring, Huff, May, & Camburn, 2008) draws attention in the literature and is evident in the case study principals. The two men were highly visible and interactive in their schools, knowing it was important to have presence and lead by example. The two women led through engaging and connected one-on-one and small group interactions.

Leading staff – the differences reflect style and preference. Karen prefers more intimate settings and direct involvement. Karleen has a similar approach combined with an ethic of care. Adam is performance driven from an accountability perspective reflecting his overall acceptance of an accountability paradigm for his own leadership evaluation. Allan leads from a position of significant confidence and assuredness, about his own authority and expertise, simple measures to affirm people at a personal level.

The nuanced differences show that context is significant and the layers of context influence the leadership strategies and behaviours of the case study principals. The personal self also influences how these principals lead for their leadership context. Their approaches are different because they are using their traits to fit the context and shaping their leadership to suit their situation and circumstances.

5.5. Chapter Conclusion

The data analysis now moves to the final phase in the mixed methods research, Chapter 6, the discussion of the findings. The nine themes to emerge from Chapter 5 are grouped into three major concepts and separated into sub-concepts for the discussion of the findings. The theme of context, which is a substantial theme with several layers, has been expanded into three themes in Chapter 6: context; right fit; and power vested in the principal. This was done to more appropriately explain

and discuss this theme. A robust and meaningful picture of the principal leadership provided in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools is presented in Chapter 6.

Chapter Six: Discussion of the Research Findings

6.1. Introduction

This study investigated how principals in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia enact their leadership, what they value, how they view effectiveness, and how they conceptualise their role. The purpose of the study was to capture from this group of Australian independent school principals what it means to be effective as a principal in the schools they lead. In the quantitative phase, an online questionnaire was used to gather data about the perspectives of 72 independent school principals leading large, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. The findings from the quantitative phase, presented in Chapter Four, were used to inform the qualitative phase, an in-depth exploration with four principals into what they believe it takes to be effective in the schools they lead. The case study principals are members of AHISA (Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia) and the state based Independent Schools Associations; while these organisations offer collegial support to the case study schools and their principals, they do not take authority and ownership of decisions that must be taken by the independent school principal. The findings from the qualitative phase, multiple case study research with four principals, were presented in Chapter Five. This chapter unpacks the research sub-questions and presents the unfolding understandings around the sub-questions. *How do principals leading large, independent schools in Australia view effectiveness? How do these principals describe effectiveness? How do they conceptualise their role? What relevant understandings of leadership apply?* This chapter interprets, explains and adds depth and meaning to the understandings of themes that emerged from the cross-case analysis, which were discussed in Chapter Five. These 11 themes were reviewed and categorised into three major concepts; which are displayed in Figure 6.1. The major concepts were identified by scanning the themes which emerged from the four narratives, and by reflecting on the data as a whole.
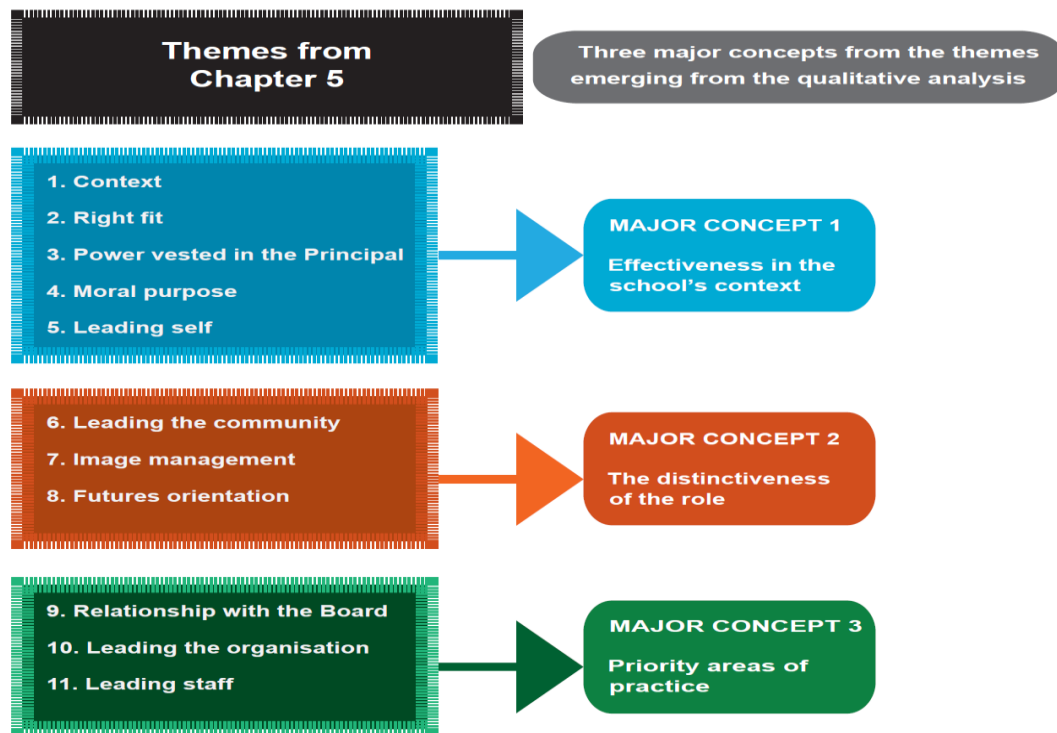
Figure 6.1. Three Major Concepts to Emerge from the Qualitative Analysis

Each of the three major concepts have several associated sub-concepts. The sub-concepts have been drawn out of the data that were presented in Table 5.5, where I analysed the themes to identify the sub-concepts that were most commonly present. Having identified the major concepts to emerge from across the cases, I separated out the major concepts into their sub-concepts. This involved moving beyond the major concepts to the broader meaning of the concepts. What did the concepts tell us about leadership in large, independent schools? This step involved reviewing the major concepts and ensuring that there were distinct, sub-concepts within. The major concepts and sub-concepts are shown in Figure 6.2.

Each one of the sub-concepts has several factors associated with them which go to the core of the findings. The factors are the crucial aspects of the independent school principal's role and responsibility that they must attend to as a matter of emphasis. These are shown in Figure 6.3, with each factor being discussed in depth in this chapter.

Chapter six is a discussion of the findings as they relate to principal effectiveness in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. The sections to follow are a discussion of the three major concepts to emerge from the themes, the sub-concepts of each major concept, and the factors in each of the sub-concepts.

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Three major concepts from the themes

Sub-concepts of the three major concepts

MAJOR CONCEPT 1

Effectiveness in the school's context

SUB-CONCEPTS

i. Leadership context

ii. The independence of independent schools

MAJOR CONCEPT 2

The distinctiveness of the role

SUB-CONCEPTS

i. Dealing with complexity

ii. Sustaining the school's future

iii. Enhancing the school's image & reputation

iv. Enhancing the whole organisation

MAJOR CONCEPT 3

Priority areas of practice

SUB-CONCEPTS

i. Holding staff accountable

ii. Leading and managing the Board

iii. The importance of high quality graduates

iv. Managing whole school operations

Figure 6.2. Sub-Concepts Identified from the Major Themes to Emerge in Chapter Five
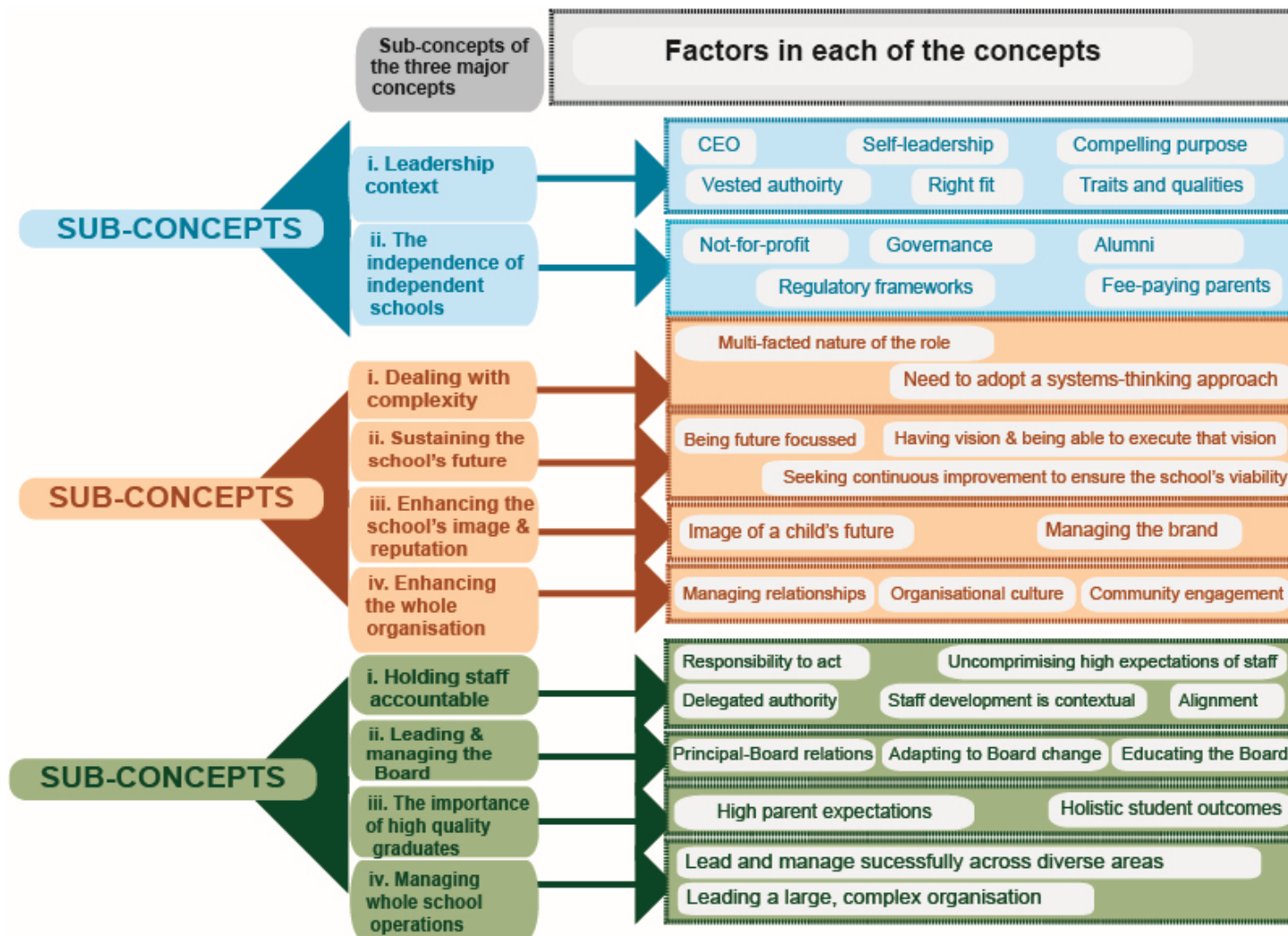
Figure 6.3. Factors Associated with Principal Effectiveness in Large, P-12, Autonomous, Independent Schools in Australia

6.2. Major Concept 1: Effectiveness in the School's Context

There are two sub-concepts to effectiveness in the school's context: the leadership context (6.2.1) and the Australian independent school context (6.2.2). The case study principals believe that to lead effectively, they must understand their school's context, appreciate how that context impacts on how they enact their leadership, and they know they must respond accordingly to the school's unique challenges and situations. Context in this research includes such aspects as organisational values and cultures, social and professional relationships and interactions, and the ways the principal is impacted, motivated and even limited by local, national and international influences. It refers to the principal's surroundings, the people they work with and for, the challenges they must meet and accept, and the viability and sustainability of their schools. School context impacts on how principal leadership is enacted in these schools. The following section deals with the first component of context – leadership context.

6.2.1. Effectiveness in the school context: Leadership context.

Leadership context in this research comprises six factors which are shown in Figure 6.4. Each one of these factors is dealt with in turn in this section.

Leadership Context					
CEO	Vested authority	Self-leadership	Right fit	Compelling purpose	Traits and qualities

Figure 6.4. Factors Associated with Effectiveness in the Leadership Context

CEO. This research has found that the case study principals are principals and chief executive officers (CEO), as understood in not-for-profit businesses and corporations. As in the corporate world, principals in independent schools sign a formal contract of employment with the board which stipulates the terms and conditions of appointment; duties and responsibilities; the principal's relationship with the board; the board's responsibilities to the principal; remuneration and salary benefits; performance review and appraisal; termination of employment procedures; and other contractual matters. It is the principal's contract and the designation of

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CEO that makes being an independent school principal in this country different from being a principal in other systems within Australia. The review of the literature presented in Chapter Two revealed that boards of independent schools regarded their principals as both CEOs and principals. An examination of the prospectuses used for the appointment of independent school principals found that the vernacular of CEO to be universal. In one school, the appointment prospectus read – *The Principal is the CEO of [Grammar School] and responsible to the Board of Trustees for the overall leadership and management of the three campuses of the School.* In another – *The role is that of Chief Executive Officer and demands high levels of commitment and extensive experience in educational leadership, management and the spiritual development of The School community.* And another – *The Principal is Chief Executive Officer of the School. He/she provides direction and advice on strategic planning for the School and is delegated responsibility by the [School] Council for day to day leadership and management of the School.* There is no ambiguity, and this is the expectation – principals in independent schools are regarded as the CEO.

The schools of the case study principals are large businesses. The principals have a formal written employment contract with the board of their schools. The contract spells out the terms and conditions regulating all aspects of the principal's employment and his/her relationship with the school and board. The contract assists the principal, school and board in understanding obligations and avoiding disputes in the future. These principals view leading their schools, with the complexities and demands that come with large autonomous, independent schools to be aligned with the accountabilities and expectations of the CEO in a large business. They believe that if a principal cannot perform in the role of a CEO, they cannot be effective; indeed, they believe that a principal would not survive in the role if they cannot. As Adam confirmed, poor performance as the chief executive comes with consequences, which may be the termination of the principal's contract. The case study principals were all in agreement; given the governance structure and the business model in their schools, their context is the CEO of an educational organisation with not-for-profit status.

To perform at the level of CEO, they must acquire appropriate business acumen and expertise to run their schools effectively as businesses/corporations. Anecdotally, principals in independent schools have not warmed to this concept,

instead preferring their role to be deemed as educational leader, and much of the current literature endorses this view, claiming instructional leadership as one of the most essential leadership functions for school principals. Because the case study principals lead schools, they do pay attention to pedagogy, teaching and learning, teacher development, instruction and assessment. However, they delegate this responsibility to executive leaders in their schools while never straying too far from the discourse and conversations. Each one of the principals agreed that the role of principal/CEO of a large school is exacting and demanding because everyone in the school (community) expects to get direct access to the principal. Adam puts it this way – *it is not like a CEO in a corporation, people cannot get access to the CEO; but in our schools, people expect to be able to see the head.*

Vested authority. As CEOs, the principals have delegated leadership for the operations and management of their schools. It is not so much the governance charter or how boards meet their fiduciary responsibilities that dictates the principal's authority, but how the boards delegate authority to the principal. Boards allow the principals to exercise their delegated authority and responsibility as CEO, mainly due to their expertise and experience and the strength of the relationships they have with their boards and school communities. Listening to the principals during the case study interviews describe the autonomy they have, reading articles they write for their school communities and speeches they deliver at assemblies and presentation days, as well as observing the commitments they make on their school's website, provides evidence that these principals are influential and commanding. They say what they believe in; they speak up.

Self-leadership. The data revealed that the principals placed a high value on the quality of self-leadership, which in this research is defined as the principal's focus on their own self-improvement and professional growth. They believe that to remain effective as the principal, they must invest in ongoing self-development and personal and professional growth. Ongoing rigorous professional development keeps them fit for the role in an ever-changing education landscape. Each one of the case study principals was able to describe their leadership journey, which was a purposeful mix of formal learning, on the job experience, learning from colleagues and affiliations, and professional reading. Some of the common elements across the four case study principals were the commitments to collegial organisations, such as

AHISA, the state-based branches of AHISA, and the state-based Associations of Independent Schools. Each one of the principals was also committed to associations that added value to the student programs, including sporting associations, and network groups. Three of the four principals had commitments to the relevant national affiliate Church bodies. Each one of the case study principals spoke of the value of these organisations and the commitments they made to them.

These principals have complex and demanding roles which require them, as individuals, to ensure they are fit for the job. Drawn from the data, 'fit' in this research is used to mean they are highly prepared and able to professionally, ethically, physically, intellectually, psychologically and spiritually meet the demands of the job. The subjects of the qualitative research, the case study principals, each have significant experience as a principal in independent schools; ranging from 16 years of experience for Adam through to Allan with 25 of years of experience. What has emerged from the cross-case analysis is that the experience gained by the case study principals from the years of leading independent schools, the ongoing commitment to their own growth and development, the wisdom gained from reflections on daily practice, and the learning from colleagues and affiliated associations are significant factors in the principal being effective in their context.

Right fit. Another factor of context to emerge from the research is 'right fit'; in this research, this means the principal's leadership compatibility and affinity with the context of the school that they are working within. According to the case study principals, the foundation for effectiveness is laid when the board make a fitting appointment. It was apparent in the case study interviews that each one of these principals held the view that they were purposefully and strategically chosen for their school by their board because they had the traits, qualities and character to do the job required at that point in the school's history. Adam, Karleen and Allan all confirmed at their respective case study interviews how hard it could be for a newly appointed principal if they were not the right fit.

While boards do their due diligence to find a suitable principal – the case study principals did their own checking and assessment of whether the school they were considering was the right fit for them. The principals described how they were aware of the ethos and the general profile and reputation of the school, and with the research they had undertaken, and the knowledge gained, chose to apply. In deciding

whether a school would be a good fit, the applicant principal reflected upon their experience, expertise, and traits, and assessed whether these were a good fit for what the school and board needed to meet the challenges and circumstances at hand at the time.

Contextually compelling relevant purpose. The data showed that each one of the case study principals had a compelling purpose that drove their actions and guided their daily work. Their purpose is a product of their values and beliefs and their hopes and aspirations for their school and the students in their school. Their compelling purpose provides meaning and direction for their leadership. Boards, when choosing a principal, expect the appointed principal to have a compelling purpose. This expectation is certainly implied in the employment prospectuses which are used in recruitment processes. Differences and similarities exist between the cases and these are summarised in Table 6.1. There is a clear, compelling purpose for each of these principals; they are deeply passionate about improving life outcomes for their students. While all lead with purpose, they differ in how they enact this, what they prioritise and what needs to be attended to in their local context. What the case study principals have in common is a purpose which gives focus to the outcomes for all students in their schools. The outcomes sought by these principals for their students come from community and board expectations. The principal must be able to understand these expectations, developing core programs and activities to see that students are on a trajectory to achieve the outcomes the community expects. The differences relate to how each principal leads to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the students in their own school's context. The principals are aware of the background and circumstances of the students in their schools, and these shape and influence what they do. These principals know that to realise their purpose, they must combine commitment and the means of enacting it. Therefore, they ensure that holistic programs providing service, leadership, and extensive co-curricular programs, are in place. These programs are designed to tap into the innate interests and abilities of students in their schools, resulting in higher levels of student engagement and better outcomes.

Karen claimed that establishing a purpose is one of the most critical things a leader does, and she described her purpose as caring for each child and the whole welfare of each child as an individual, and she really believes that this must be dealt

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with in her school. Adam's purpose was to be aspirational for Regional, holding high expectations for what the school could achieve. He was motivated and driven by a determination to raise the expectations and aspirations of his community and create opportunities for the young people of Regional, beyond what the community imagined possible.

Table 6.1

Similarities and Overarching Differences in Compelling Purpose

	Adam	Allan	Karen	Karleen
Overarching Differences	For each student to be aspirational and have high expectations	For the graduates to be esteemed and become community leaders	Caring for the welfare of each child as an individual	World-class opportunities for the student
Similarities	- All students matter to each one of the principals - The principals are cognisant of their student demography - They ensure that holistic programs are in place and sustained - They insist on high levels of student engagement and quality outcomes for each student			

Adam wanted the students to look beyond their immediate area for employment and training. He wanted them to think about attending university, the best universities in the state, to compete at sport with the best athletes in the state and perform artistically beside the best schools in the region. Students in Allan's school are privileged; they have an advantage and opportunity that most other young people do not have, because of the wealth and social class of their parents. The ICSEA score for Founders exceeds 1130 (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2018). The national average is 1000. This means that students attending Founders have a very high level of educational advantage (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2014). Like the other case study principals, Allan has a purpose, but his context makes that different. He wants the next generation of leaders serving national and even international corporations and organisations to come from Founders, and he wants to make sure that they are

equipped with ethical and moral character to be just and humane leaders in their chosen vocations. Karleen wanted to ensure her leadership meant every student at Centenary could be successful; she was clear, her purpose was *to provide a world-class education for the girls of Centenary,* and she worked tirelessly to see that all on her staff supported her with this aspiration.

Traits and qualities. The traits possessed by these principals have emerged as one of the most significant enablers of their effectiveness. In this research, I have chosen to use traits to mean leadership traits and characteristics, the personal qualities that are linked to effective leadership. During the case study interviews, the principals were able to describe a set of traits that they believe they need to enable them to lead effectively; these are shown in Figure 6.5. The case study principals discussed the traits and qualities they believe they have, which made them a good fit for their school context. This was not in response to specific questions during the interviews but raised by the principals during the case study visits. They were able to describe how they have developed, deepened and strengthened their own skills and knowledge so that they are fit to provide the leadership and direction that is required.
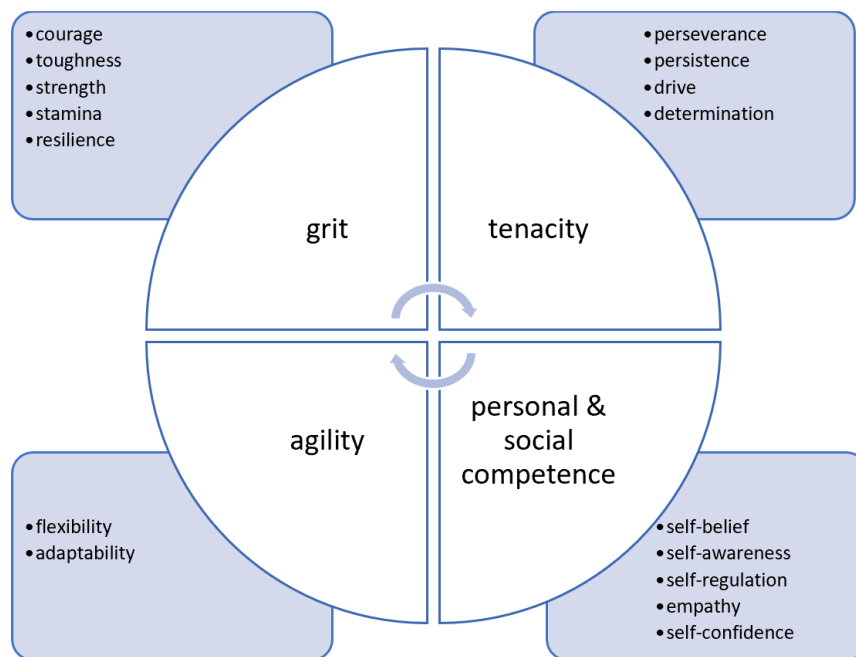
Figure 6.5. Traits Associated with Effectiveness Identified by the Case Study Principals

The meanings and understandings associated with these traits and qualities have been explained and discussed in earlier chapters; this graphic shows the traits and qualities to enhance the discussion in this section. The next section addresses the second major component of context, that is, the independent school system in Australia.

6.2.2. Effectiveness in the school context: The independence of independent schools

The independent school context in Australia is different from the government school context, where schools are owned and managed by state and territory governments, and the Catholic systemic school context, where schools are operated by Catholic education authorities (either systems or orders). The independent school context in this research comprises several factors shown in Figure 6.6. Each one of these factors is discussed in turn.

The Independent School Context				
Not-for-profit	Regulatory frameworks	Governance	Fee paying parents	Alumni

Figure 6.6. Factors Associated with Effectiveness in the Independent School Context

Not for Profit. In order to receive federal funding, independent schools are registered as not-for-profit institutions and comply with wide-ranging and detailed legislative requirements of the Australian Education Act 2013 (Australian Government Department of Education, 2019). A not-for-profit school in Australia is a school that does not operate for the profit, personal gain or other benefit for individuals, for example, the principal, directors or fee-paying parents (Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission, 2018). Not-for-profit independent schools can make a profit, called a surplus, but any profit made must be used in pursuing the school's purposes, objectives and keeping the school running. For example, this may be reinvesting in capital projects, building new infrastructure or accumulating a reserve, so it continues to be sustainable. All independent schools must demonstrate that the funds they receive from the government have been expended appropriately, and they must submit annual financial reports to the Australian Government

Department of Education. Those reports in the form of a financial questionnaire detail how Australian Government recurrent grant funding has been used. Recurrent funding supports the operating expenses of non-government schools and is a significant and necessary component of the income for virtually all independent schools in Australia. The financial questionnaire draws on the school's audited financial statements. The financial operations of independent schools are subject to scrutiny which includes an assessment of the school's financial viability and examination of the school's funding sources. Schools must provide the Australian Government with documentation certified by qualified accountants regarding the expenditure of Australian Government grants.

Regulatory frameworks. Independent schools operate in a sector that is heavily regulated by existing compliance bodies (AISNSW, 2019). One of these bodies is the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), an independent Australian government body that acts as Australia's corporate regulator. Generally, ASIC's role is to enforce and regulate company and financial services laws to protect Australian consumers, investors and creditors. Independent schools' financial operations must satisfy ASIC legislation and requirements. A second regulatory body is the Australian Taxation Office (ATO), an Australian statutory agency and the principal revenue collection body for the Australian government. The ATO has responsibility for administering the Australian federal taxation system, superannuation legislation, and other associated matters. Independent schools must comply with ATO requirements as they relate to tax and superannuation legislation. Independent schools must also meet the accreditation and registration requirements for a non-Government school established by the relevant state or territory government, the NSW Education and Standards Authority in NSW, for example. As such they must ensure the school's educational programs, financial decisions, staffing, co-curricular content, quality teaching, learning, assessment and school standards and current and future development, meet the respective state's legislative and regulatory requirements.

By virtue of the principal's contract of employment with the school board, responsibility and accountability for a school's compliance with the regulatory framework rests with the principal. Principals ensure that the school complies with legislation and regulations covering employment law, equal employment

opportunity, industrial awards, work health and safety, privacy and child protection legislation, as well as regulations relating to building and fire codes, for example, as is the case with any other company in Australia. The principals in the case study schools are expected to ensure that their schools meet the standards of social and financial accountability applying to all corporate entities or charities in Australia. Under the ACNC Act entities that are registered charities and not-for-profits have obligations. These include keeping financial records and operational records, reporting their information annually and complying with ACNC governance standards (AISNSW, 2019).

Governance. Case study principals were able to explain how the boards of their schools delegated the responsibility for running the school to the principal and in exchange, held them accountable for their school's overall performance and sustainability. Independent school boards take an active and keen interest in the day-to-day management activities and whole school operations because of the ensuing impact on the board's legal and fiduciary responsibilities (Howell, 2020). Because these school boards are set up as companies under the regulations of ASIC, directors assume significant legal and risk responsibilities. They, therefore, want to be informed of how the organisation is being managed to ensure all legal obligations are being met. This introduces a layer of accountability and responsibility which is simply not present where the principal can rely on the system to support the school. The case study principals do enjoy autonomy, but it also creates another tension – they are fully accountable for the school's total performance in every aspect of the school's operation.

Fee-paying parents. Independent schools require parents to pay school fees which represent a significant proportion of the total operating income required to run their schools. The income required not only covers the education of students but also pays for the costs of managing a large, not-for-profit business, as is the situation for the four case study principals. The proportion of total income that comes from parents paying fees ranges from just under 50% in one case study school through to just over 85% in another. These data are obtained from https://myschool.edu.au and pertain to the case study schools' operations in 2017.

There is a lot at stake in these schools if the principal is not effective at sustaining the school's enrolment market share. At risk are the reputation of the

school in the community, the financial viability of the school, and the long-term sustainability if enrolments decline. The high stakes are due to the tension that arises due to the competitive enrolment market and the high fees that they charge. Like any corporation – the cases study principals must see that their schools, as businesses, are solvent and that their financial future is secure, and this means meeting parents needs and expectations.

Alumni – past students' associations. The case study schools have significant numbers of past students given the age of these schools. Two of the schools are older than 150 years, a third is more than 100 years and the youngest, Regional, approaching 30 years. When a student graduates from one of these schools they become part of an extensive past students' network; which are typically respected communities. This layer of the independent school context creates challenges *and* opportunities for principals in large, independent schools and to be effective in their roles the principals have to strategically and intentionally navigate these waters.

Being part of the past students' associations presents alumni with the opportunity to access an extensive network of fellow past students from around the world. The schools work hard to ensure that the past students remain connected, and principals know it is their job to have in place staff and programs to strengthen bonds between the school and its past students; and for good reason. Past students are involved in school life through mentoring programs for current students where they share their skills and experiences. These schools have benefitted from the philanthropic actions of past students; the legacies left by past students have been key in developing teaching and learning facilities, as well as providing funds for future projects to enable these schools to continue to deliver an outstanding education for their students. Past students give artefacts and heritage memorabilia to the school's archives. Scholarships provided by past students give students the opportunity of an education in these schools where the family's own financial situation would not allow it. One of the schools offers scholarships to indigenous students. Another, has as a goal to grow their endowment so that they can continually provide 100 potentially outstanding students from families with proven socio-economic need, the opportunity of a secondary education at that school. These programs are part of the schools' social justice policies. These schools use the stories and achievements of past students to inspire and encourage current students and to

promote their school to prospective parents. Keenly engaged past students have transformative effects over time on these schools. The past students' associations exist to maintain the traditions and foster the welfare of these schools and to unite past students with current ones. One school's web-site contains this statement – *we strive to develop life-long relationships within the community and enhance the school environment to ensure its long-term future.* Past students' associations are a unique part of the context for independent schools in Australia.

Managing and fostering the networks requires expertise and astuteness, relationship-building qualities and negotiating skills. The principal who is not able to nurture and manage the past students' association makes themselves vulnerable and puts their leadership at risk because of the influence of the past students. The principal requires political acumen to manage this part of the independent school context.

Being an independent school also means that these principals must deal with the concept of professional isolation – the principal has vested authority but this often leads to the principal leading on their own, and therefore the decisions that the principal makes could have a direct impact on the viability of the school. That impact can be positive in cases of high-performing and successful principals and can be negative in the case of an ineffective principal. A principal in a government or systemic Catholic school has the support of a governing educational system to address, for example, legal, financial, maintenance and building development issues. These offer systemic support and backup. This is not the case for independent school principals in this research. Each one of the case study principals attested to how *lonely the job is.* This is the *sine qua non* for these principals – they are not part of systems where there is central system support. If they fail, there is a potential for closure of their school.

The next section, 6.3, discusses the distinctiveness of the principal's role in a large, complex, independent school in Australia, the second major concept.

6.3. Major Concept 2: The distinctiveness of the role

The four main sub-concepts are: dealing with complexity (6.3.1); sustaining the school's future (6.3.2); enhancing the school's image and reputation (6.3.3); and managing stakeholder groups (6.3.4).

6.3.1. The distinctiveness of the role: Dealing with complexity.

The literature review showed that principals in large, independent schools in Australia today face increasing complexity, change and diversity. Add to this, the case study principals lead complex, multi-faceted schools. They have a complex set of responsibilities and accountabilities that must be met in order to be effective. There are two factors which will be discussed in this section, shown in Figure 6.7.

Dealing with Complexity	
The multi-faceted nature of the role	The need to adopt a systems-thinking approach

Figure 6.7. The Distinctiveness of the Role: Factors in Dealing with Complexity

Multi-faceted role: Leading large, complex, multi-faceted, autonomous, independent schools in Australia requires significant leadership intelligence, knowledge and experience. Table 6.2 is used to illustrate the complexity of these schools. These principals manage large annual operational budgets – they range from $25 million (M) to over $70M as well as large capital budgets – from $20M to $50M (over a three-year period during the data gathering). These principals can expect to be paid salaries in the range of $515,000 to $650,000 (Whiting, 2018). By comparison, the highest-paid principal in NSW government schools receives a salary of $180,000. The most experienced Catholic school principals in NSW leading schools of more than 1,500 students earns a salary of $220,000. This research does not extend to analysing principal salaries, but it would seem on the surface, at least, that principals are paid more in independent schools than their counterparts in other systems to reflect the complexity and demands of the role.

Table 6.2

School Features that Exist in the Case Study Schools

Factors	Centenary	Founders	Waterview	Regional
	Karleen	Allan	Karen	Adam
$ICSEA_1$	1184	1132	1143	1064
Annual income (2017)	$70M	$66M	$38M	$28M
Capital (2015-2017)	$51M	$50M	$21M	$18M
Enrolments (2017)	2,203	2,026	1,500	1,411
Employees, FTE_2 (2017)	322	281	192	167
Faith	Faith A	Faith A	Non-denominational	Faith B
Complexity	Four sub-schools	Three campuses on three sites	Four sub-schools, two campuses on two sites	Four sub-schools & a working farm

Notes.

1. ICSEA - Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage. ICSEA provides an indication of the socio-educational backgrounds of students. The national average is 1000.
2. FTE – full-time equivalent

There are other aspects of these schools that further illustrate the complexity of the role for these principals. The principals must manage significant land holdings, assets, property, plant and equipment. Regional owns 38 hectares of land and Centenary has 20 hectares, Waterview has two campuses and Regional three campuses. These are substantial landholdings. The principals in these schools must sustain considerable financial foundations to ensure they have the resources for capital projects. These schools do not receive Australian government funding for capital projects. They must lead and manage multiple stakeholder groups, including affiliated churches; past students' associations, parents and friends' associations, and

parent support groups for various co-curricular programs and activities. The case study principals must manage wide-reaching legal and compliance issues. The case study schools all have extensive school events and functions, clubs and activities, international service programs, and host international staff and student groups. They must sustain the school's unique brand and reputation in order to meet enrolment targets and guarantee the school remains viable. Schools of the complexity of the case study schools also manage affiliated businesses: performing arts centres available to the public; early learning centres, outside school hours care facilities; cafeterias and dining halls; and uniform shops, for example. The data have shown that these challenges require principals in these schools to adopt a systems thinking approach to their leadership.

Systems thinking. What has emerged from the data is that the case study principals were able to understand their schools as a set of complex interactions among the many interconnected parts of the school that need to work together for the entire school and its operations, to perform successfully. They can see their school, how all the separate parts need to come together. Effective marketing and positive public relations lead to interest in the school which impacts on enrolments. Astute financial management ensures that assets and resources are available to support quality student programs and activities, to give two examples. Leading any school, with its inescapable complexity, has never been an easy job. However, practitioners and researchers alike agree that principals in independent schools face particularly complex difficulties and accountabilities (Degenhardt, 2015). Principals in the case study schools view their school as a system, thinking holistically about the component parts that make up the organisation. Allan introduced the conductor metaphor in his case study visit: *we are like a conductor; we are not playing the instruments. But it is the head's job to get the orchestra together and to play beautiful music together.* The conductor metaphor is a good illustration of the systems thinking concept at work in Allan's leadership. Drucker (1988) claimed that leaders of large information-based businesses 20 years hence (circa 2008) would likely resemble the conductor of a large symphony orchestra than the models of leadership in business. "There are probably few orchestra conductors who could coax even one note out of a French horn, let alone show the horn player how to do it. But the conductor can focus the horn player's skill and knowledge on the musician's

joint performance" (Drucker, 1988, p. 7). Effective principal leadership in the case study schools means successfully managing all aspects of the operation with the future firmly in mind, and the financial viability of the school steadfastly in the principal's strategic thinking. Karen described how her effectiveness was measured by her acumen across all areas of operations: business, financial and project management, and education. These principals appreciate the dynamic interplay that exists between all facets of a school's operation and they perceive the need to lead across the different aspects of the school's operations.

6.3.2. The distinctiveness of the role: Sustaining the school's future.

Sustaining the school's future comprises three factors shown in Figure 6.8, with each one discussed in detail in this section.

Sustaining the School's Future		
Being focused on the future	Having vision and being able to execute that vision	Seeking continuous improvement to ensure the school's viability

Figure 6.8. The Distinctiveness of the Role: Factors in Sustaining the School's Future

The case study principals are deeply invested in the school's future, and viability and each one made a long-term commitment to the school. At the close of 2018, Adam and Karen had concluded eight years' service as principal, Karleen, 11 years, and Allan, 10 years. During the case study interviews, each spoke of how they wanted to leave a legacy which would see the school successful beyond their own time. This requires principals to be focused on the future, plan the school's future, hold a quantifiable vision for the school's future and engage the community in realising the vision, and continuously strive to see that the schools perform at their best.

Futures focused. There was no equivocation from the case study principals that planning for the school's future was vital, and their success in this aspect of their role determines their effectiveness. These schools' destinies, or their futures, will be

where the principal takes them; given they have the authority vested in them by their boards. Their leadership can have positive and enduring benefits, a healthy legacy, or if their leadership is ineffective, can put the school's viability at risk. Karen explained her work this way – *I think about the sustainability of the school a lot, we have a rapidly growing demographic, we have enrolments now, but in ten years' time, it might not be the case. I have to think about our enrolment base. Sustainability is being realistic about how we spend money and our debt*. Thinking as CEOs, they described how a critical performance area is their ability to maintain a sustainable enrolment base to ensure the future viability of the school. They knew it was their responsibility to ensure market-share was sustained which resulted in the school's long-term viability and success. Their response to this part of their responsibility is to do all they can to see that their school is highly sought after by parents seeking enrolments. Each one of the case study principals wanted their school to be considered the best option for parents in the catchment market. These principals look beyond the next five to ten years; their eyes are on the long-term success of their schools for generations to come. Adam asked his board to do more than the typical cycle of short-term strategic plans, which are common in most independent schools; he used what he termed *scenario building,* thinking strategically, and planning the future for the school, 15 years into the future. Allan's leadership of Founders had a clear futures perspective, honouring the past *and* plotting the future. *I am not about day to day matters; I am about tomorrow. My job is all about tomorrow; always about strategic planning and being future-oriented.* Karen agreed that *principals need to think strategically all the time.* The case study principals described how crucial it is to ensure the school's sustainability and long-term viability by making wise and forward-thinking decisions now.

Vision. When I visited the principals in their schools, they did not discuss the tasks at hand – instead they talked about their compelling purpose, and the aspirations they held for their schools. Each one of the case study principals had a clear vision for their school which was expressed as their hopes and aspirations for their schools. A significant contributor to their effectiveness is the work they do with staff to ensure their commitment to the aspirations, vision and values that the principal sets and puts into operation, in all the essential areas previously mentioned. The authority vested in the principal by the board enables the principal to be

successful in this pursuit. These principals know that to be successful in realising the vision, they must engage and connect with their community; they involve the school community in establishing a compelling shared vision. To realise the vision they employ well-crafted, effective communications to ensure that all in their community are engaged and supportive. These principals plot the school's future, planning, and executing critical strategic decisions to ensure the school's future is buoyant. They are the story-tellers and symbolic leaders, ensuring the vision is lived by acting as the custodians of the school's history.

Continuous improvement. It was evident during the case study interviews and visits to the principals' schools that they wanted to get better; they wanted to keep improving. The data show that they do not accept the status quo, they create a sense of urgency about what needs to be done. They challenge entrenched practices and behaviours and respond to local and global challenges. Karleen described how she would seek out changes in the education landscape that can have a bearing on her own school, and she would bring that knowledge into her own improvement agenda. Being effective as the principal means provoking change and navigating the school's future as a means to manage the complex, competitive and volatile educational world that these schools are in. The data suggest that these case study principals lead, motivate and manage change, and lead for continuous improvement by being agile, flexible and adapting to the school's changing context. When discussing how they approach change leadership in their schools, they described how they used a combination of research, reading, ideas obtained from colleagues and their learned associations and they told of how they trust their instincts and intuitions accumulated from years of experience. They know what needs attention and what needs to be done and they have an appetite for change and transformation, for seeking to be *the best that the school can be*.

An important component of sustaining the school's future viability is to ensure that the school is projected in an extremely positive light on the broader community, and that prospective parents find the school appealing and want an enrolment for their son/daughter. This aspect of the role is discussed in the next section.

6.3.3. The distinctiveness of the role: Enhancing the school's image and reputation.

Managing the school's image and reputation is an essential element of the role for each of these principals. Appearances matter in the case study schools and it is the principal's responsibility to ensure that the school is presented in the most favourable way possible so that any experience people have with the school leaves a positive impression. Parents of independent school children are buying more than their child's classroom experience or curriculum offerings, more than getting an education, they believe that if they choose the *right* school, they can gain social advantage for their child. The concept of social advantage is not just held in the minds of parents, it is widely discussed and promoted as a factor in schools, which ACARA feel is worth reporting, per each school's ICSEA (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2018) score.

These principals are building an image of the child's future. The whole management of the brand/image is an integral part of their role but adds to the pressure of the position. The case study principals discussed how they believe that their school must be successful in all areas, academics, sport, cultural activities, service, leadership and personal development of students so that parents commit to the school's ideals and values. These principals create the image that gives their school a competitive edge over other options that parents, and students have in their area.

6.3.4. The distinctiveness of the role: Managing stakeholder groups.

This section discusses the part of the role that requires the principal to engage purposefully and tactically with the whole organisation. To do this effectively, the principal must be politically astute. Politics is an inescapable part of the life of an independent school principal. They operate in a complex environment, working with stakeholders both inside and outside of their schools. Stakeholders are driven by different interests and motivations, and tensions can occur between the different groups. The principal must manage these by determining important priorities: influencing external decision-makers; building partnerships with external partners

and internal stakeholders; managing the risks for the organisation; and managing the competition for resources within the school. They know how to build a broad base of support; how to talk to people who oppose them and how to handle the board member who may not be onside. Political astuteness is recognised as a set of skills, knowledge, and judgements about the interests, goals, and values of stakeholders (Hartley, Alford, Hughes, & Yates, 2013). Because these principals are politically astute, they are aware of the contributions that all members of the organisation can make and they place importance on engaging with school community groups in supporting the principal's aspirations for the school. They do this by actively building respectful relationships amongst the community groups. These principals promote the school in the wider community as well by supporting community organisations. They build alliances and affiliations with community groups for the benefit of the school and especially the students. They have the ability to work all the groups to gain their respect and bring all groups together.

Engaging with the whole organisation comprises three factors, shown in Figure 6.9 and discussed in turn in this section.

Managing Stakeholder Groups		
Managing relationships	Community engagement	Organisational culture

Figure 6.9. Factors in Managing Stakeholder Groups

Managing relationships. Managing relationships and stakeholder influence weighs heavily on the shoulders of these principals and bears on the principal's energy and resources to engage positively and productively with all groups. These principals have to keep the community focused, informed and valued. They cannot afford to impair or fracture relationships with any stakeholder; it requires significant skill, judgement and expertise to manage this. Each one of the stakeholder groups brings a whole level of voice, expectations, influences, and challenges, which the principal must manage productively for the school's benefit. Adam had to mobilise his resources, acumen and resilience to remove board members; there are very few principals that face this sort of challenge which is a result of the multitude of stakeholders in these school communities. Adam was able to do this because of the

authority vested in him by his board chair and due to his adeptness at managing challenging situations with stakeholders.

The schools of the case study principals are funded by a combination of parental contribution and federal and state government funding; the majority comes from parents and other private sources. The willingness and commitment of the parents in these schools to pay school fees is the foundation of the business model in these schools. During the case study interviews, these principals discussed how parent expectations around educational excellence, high-quality teaching and learning, a safe, supportive and caring environment, and high-quality facilities, impact on their leadership. The case study principals acknowledged that in their schools, parents pay high fees, and in return for this, parents expect good educational outcomes. Each one of these schools is a high fee-paying school, for the demographic that they serve, they are expensive for parents to afford. If the school, and by extension the principal, fails to meet the expectations of the fee-paying parent, then the parent may choose the option to withdraw their son/daughter and move them to another school. In isolated cases, this may not be a problem. However, if a sufficient number of disgruntled parents voice their objection in the community and through social media platforms, this can have a deleterious impact on the reputation of the school and enrolments. These principals must create and sustain schools that parents will want to invest in by paying fees which makes nurturing the relationships with parents, and community groups, vitally important.

School community engagement. Without the confidence of the community embodied through quality relationships and eager engagement, it is hard for a case study principal to establish a footing from which they can effectively lead their school. This does not happen by chance or by the authority of the position; it happens due to the conscientious effort on the part of the principal to nurture ethical relationships every day, in every interaction. Each school is its own community, with a unique context, and the goals, aspirations, and capabilities of its students, teachers and surrounding community reflect its purpose. The case study principals are judicious in reading the landscape and appreciating the context of their own school, understanding the needs and aspirations of the community, and knowing the demography of the parent group. And from this position they engage the community to support the school.

The case study research identified the multitude of community groups and stakeholders that these principals must sustain relationships with; they are multi-levelled and complex. They are represented in Figure 6.10. I developed this list from reviewing the schools' web-sites and publications and also from the transcripts of case study interviews. This list is not exhaustive. To put some context on the depth of community engagement and stakeholder management that is required by these principals, Regional has eight official social media accounts, and Centenary has 10 official parent support groups. The principals in this study were able to meet the challenge of building engagement with key school community stakeholders so that the stakeholders are willing and able to collaborate and support the vision and goals that the principal has for the school.

Groups within the school community

- **The chair and members of the board**
- **Teachers, support and operational staff**
- **Parents, individually and collectively**
- **Parent associations and support groups**
- **Alumni, old boys and old girls**
- **Co-curricular clubs**
- **Outside hours school care providers**
- **Social media communities**
- **Sponsors, donors and philanthropists**
- **Ministers of the affiliated local churches**

External stakeholders

- **The state based AIS**
- **Teacher unions**
- **Universities and colleges**
- **The wider geographical community**
- **Local, state and federal governments**
- **Members of parliament and opposition**
- **Community services, Children's Guardian and other like agencies**
- **Hierarchy of the affiliated churches**

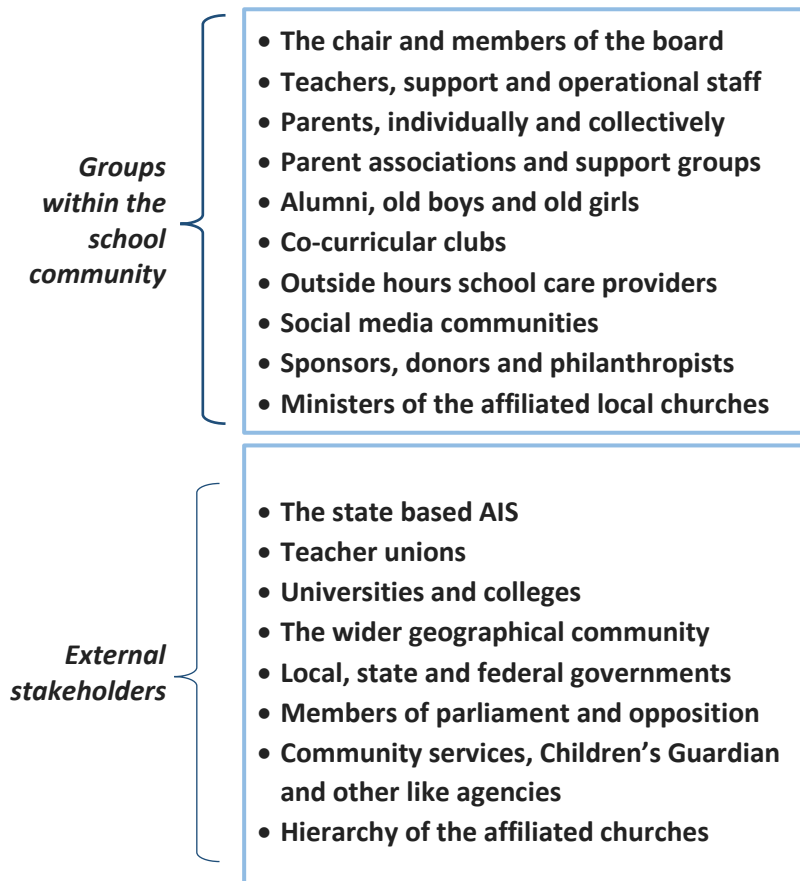*Figure 6.10.* The Many Layers to Community Groups and Stakeholders

Organisational culture. In the case study interviews, the principals referred to culture on a regular basis. I interpreted this to mean organisational culture. As described in Chapter 2, organisational culture (Schein, 2004) is the way things are done in a school – a shared sense of purpose and vision; social behaviours and the

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way people interact with each other; norms, espoused values, beliefs, and assumptions; rituals, ceremonies and traditions; history and stories; people and relationships; architecture, symbols, and artefacts; and identity and image. In this study, ceremonies and traditions, architecture, symbols, artefacts, identity and image were observed, and the impact of the principal's leadership evident at these levels of culture. I found from the case study interviews that each of the principals had strong views about the sort of organisational culture that needed to prevail in their schools if their schools were to successfully achieve the goals and aspirations that they had, as the principal, for their schools. They have values and beliefs and definite views about what needs to be done and how to go about getting it done. Principals were able to articulate their intents and purposes when it came to norms, expectations, and how they were prepared to hold people to account if staff chose not to be compliant.

Case study principals explained how they would select their executive leaders, and other employees, whom they believe would support the direction that they had for the school. When change is not going to plan, or as expected, the principal will use his/her authority to insist on new behaviours that will produce the outcome he/she wants. These principals also claimed that they would act to address issues they believe needed to be addressed; they would not shy away from this. These principals agreed that if the culture is not what they want, or is desirable, then they would work at addressing this; and they agree this is a significant part of their role.

A significant part of the discussions during each case study interview was the principals explaining how they accept responsibility for the tone and climate in their schools. At a personal level they know they have a responsibility to model a positive, and optimistic mind-set. Adam puts it this way, *the tone of the school gives a really good indication of how things are going, and in turn, is the head doing a good job.* Allan also said he would judge a principal's effectiveness on the school tone and feeling that you experience. Climate is a manifestation of culture (Schein, 2004). On reflection, I have come to understand that the principals were using culture and climate interchangeably without distinguishing between the two.

This concludes the discussion of the findings as they relate to the distinctiveness of the role of the school principal in large, complex, independent schools in Australia. The next section discusses the third of the major concepts to

emerge from the research, priority areas of practice. These are the areas of a principal's work where they expend their time and energy because they know they are the areas they have to give priority to, in order to be effective in their context.

6.4. Major Concept 3: Priority areas of practice

This major concept compromises four sub-concepts: holding staff accountable (6.4.1); leading and managing the board (6.4.2); the importance of high-quality graduates (6.4.3); and managing whole school operations (6.4.4).

6.4.1. Priority areas of practice: Holding staff accountable.

The case study principals have high expectations of their staff, and there are robust accountability frameworks to ensure that staff comply and that they perform. Each one of the case study principals has the courage to challenge teachers if they are not doing all they can for the learning growth and wellbeing of students. They know it is their job to see that the staff are aligned with the direction that the school is headed, led by the principal. They will act where and when they need to. The sub-concept, holding staff accountable, has five factors shown in Figure 6.11.

Holding Staff Accountable				
Responsibility to act	Alignment	Uncompromising high expectations of staff	Delegated authority	Staff development is contextual

Figure 6.11. Priority Areas of Practice: Factors in Holding Staff Accountable

Responsibility to act. There is significant work to be done by these principals to lead, develop and align staff across all areas of the school's operations. If they do not, they expose their own schools to significant legal and compliance risk and put their own tenure at risk. These principals are leaders who know how to lead and develop their staff, and hold them accountable for the employee's commitment to the school's strategic direction and goals and aspirations. During the case study interviews, there was a central theme running through the conversations; the case study principals required their staff to perform at high levels and to support the direction, plans and aspirations that they had for the school. There was a clear

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expectation held by these principals that staff would be committed. The case study principals believe they must provide robust and authoritative leadership within a collegial, collaborative and team-based approach to working with executive and middle leaders. These principals acknowledged the tension that exists between autonomy and supervision. They are prepared to delegate decision making and authority to executive team members who have responsibilities for different aspects of the organisation, yet, they stay close to the decision-making processes of their executive leaders, providing wisdom, counsel and direction if needed.

The concept of 'right fit' which has been discussed at length in this research, also means that the principal has to have the right attributes and qualities to be able to mobilise the staff to work towards the school's goals and aspirations as set by the principal. These principals lead large, highly competitive organisations with big budgets, so they cannot leave things to chance; they have a responsibility to act if matters need attention.

Alignment. There is significant work to be done by these principals ensuring that the staff working in different sections across the whole enterprise are focused on the same ends and that the staff see and appreciate the connections and alignment that is needed for whole school effectiveness. A significant contributor to the case study principals' effectiveness is the work they do with staff to ensure they get staff commitment to the culture, aspirations, vision and values that the principal sets and puts into operation. What this research has found is that the role of principal in large, P-12, autonomous, independent school in Australia is less to do with the detail of teaching and learning, classroom instruction, assessment, and pedagogy, but more to do with leading and developing staff at a more corporate level, at the level of vision, strategy, aspiration, reputation and intent.

In the meetings that I observed these principals had with their staff and when walking about their schools with them watching them interacting with staff, I could see the deliberate role modelling, teaching and coaching that was being provided. Conversations were purposeful opportunities to reinforce the principal's expectations. I observed that the principals would articulate what they wanted to achieve to garner staff alignment to the principal's aspirations and goals. I witnessed them take every opportunity to articulate their purpose for the school, and to build the staff's alignment with the work of the principal on behalf of the school. It

seemed to me that these were quite natural and could be part of everyday conversations.

Uncompromising high expectations of staff. These principals know that it is the level of staff commitment to the school's context that really counts. They spoke candidly about their role in developing their staff, and if they get this right now, that will aid their own effectiveness in the role. There is not a lot of tolerance for indifference or recalcitrance in staff, shown by the case study principals. If individuals are not progressing at the rate that the principals want, they will intervene and ensure that individuals are progressing. Otherwise, the principal is not able to meet the expectations of the parents and the board. There is a hard edge to these principals' expectations and accountabilities of their staff. Allan and Adam are explicit about this, they are prepared to work with their staff, but at the end of the day, it will be the principal's way. Karleen also clearly stated, *the staff here know that I do not accept mediocrity. They know that if there is poor performance, it will be addressed, and they know I will move staff on if they aren't performing.*

Staff in the case study principals' schools are expected to accept and agree to the expectations that the principal is working to promote. It is not negotiable. They are expected to commit to the full value set of the school. Principals are unyielding on this. Each one of the case study principals attested to the critical importance of recruiting, selecting and promoting the right staff. This is their strategy for building and sustaining the culture they want in their schools. When people are employed in these schools, they must comply with the school's objectives and direction, if they do not – they do not usually stay employed. If a staff member is not committed to the school's direction, principals will get involved and act.

Delegated authority. While these principals hold their staff to account, they are also comfortable to delegate core aspects of the school's operation to critical executive staff and the middle and senior leaders in their schools. To do this, they trust themselves and their instincts, putting their faith in others whom they know are trustworthy. One of the first matters to attend to for each one of the case study principals when appointed to the role was to build a quality executive or senior leadership team around them by purposefully selecting people that they know will be able to lead and manage the school successfully across the important operational areas. With a quality team around them, the principal can confidently delegate and

distribute decision-making to the executive team and give autonomy to the staff who directly report to them. While giving general autonomy, they do check in regularly with the team one on one and in team meetings to provide guidance and direction, to review progress being made and to recalibrate strategy if the principal feels this is necessary. Through these meetings, they can reinforce their own thinking and values and beliefs so that the team understands and supports the principal's aspirations.

Staff development is contextual. The differences in the contexts for each of the schools means that each principal has different work to do with their staff. Adam's task at his school where parents pay, on average, tuition fees of around $9,000 (2017) per student is entirely different from Allan's school where the average tuition fee is more than $25,000 (2017). The nature of students in each school is different, so too their aspirations, and this brings with it different responsibilities for the principal as they plan staff development programs and professional learning so that each teacher can contribute in purposeful ways to the full co-curriculum. In these schools it is not an option to be involved in the co-curriculum and this requires teacher expertise and development. For example, Centenary has an elite athlete program that has produced national team athletes and world champions. Such programs need the full support of teachers and appropriate training and development. Classroom teachers have to support students who are not at school to meet their academic demands, this requires teachers being competent in online learning. Teachers must be part of developing and sustaining personalised education plans for students who compete at this level. The international student centre at Regional welcomes students from many different parts of the world, who have chosen to make Regional their school in Australia. Teachers require distinctive training to be able to work with these students. Waterview supports a small village in an under-developed country and provides in-country experience and service to their students. These programs require teachers to develop their skills and attitudes to support such programs. Such programs impact on the daily instructional programs of teachers and demand teachers are suitably trained. The holistic programs provided in the case study schools are quite unique and require the school suitably trains and develops staff for these contexts.

The case study principals have shown a willingness to embrace new initiatives in their schools and introduce innovative programs for their students to

address the needs of the students in their setting. These initiatives have required the principal to work with their staff to ensure that the staff adopt and commit to such programs. This work is contextual and is different for each of the case study principals.

6.4.2. Priority areas of practice: Leading and managing the board.

During the case study visits and interviews, a significant amount of time was devoted to discussing the principal's relationship with the school board, the impact that the board has on the autonomy and authority of the principal, and the challenges associated with managing the local school board. Indeed, this is one area of the role that requires constant vigilance on the part of the independent school principal. Despite this, the case study principals see members of the board as important in their own work as they pursue their vision for the school. Leading and managing the board has three related factors shown in Figure 6.12.

Leading and Managing the Board		
Principal-board relations	Adapting to board change	Educating the board

Figure 6.12. Priority Areas of Practice: Factors in Leading and Managing the Board

Principal-board relations. The relationship between a principal and the board is critical to the success of a school. What this research has confirmed is that a positive, productive relationship between the board and the principal is an enabler for effective principal leadership. These principals know that it is worth putting time and effort into this relationship. For these principals, leading the board involves supporting and assisting the board as a whole and with directors individually to manage the board's role of governance and oversight. How well this is done by the principal impacts on their overall effectiveness and perhaps, more importantly, the tenure of the principal. Adam was emphatic: *engagement with the school board in mission and vision is critical.* Karleen observed that, *if you've got a robust, healthy, open relationship with your chair and the board, you can really do anything. So that is important.* The principal's capacity to successfully manage the expectations of the

board and the relationships that come with that requires the principal to have significant political astuteness, experience and wisdom. It requires the principal to engage in appropriate professional learning in the area of governance. Adam is *a member of the CEO Institute and a member of the Australian Institute of Management.* Karen, like Adam, is also a member of the Australian Institute of Management and completed *the Australian Institute of Company Director's course.*

Adapting to board change. There is a residual risk for principals in these schools, should the board chair change, or the makeup of the board change. When this happens, the principal's leadership traits, qualities and practices may no longer be the right fit for board members and when this happens the principal must draw on their agility and adaptability to deal with this challenge. This is the tenuous nature of the principal's appointment in an autonomous, independent school. And as such, they must be able to adapt to the changing needs of the board and to the changing membership of the board, including changes to the chair. The principal's capacity to manage this complexity is aided when the principal has significant, vested authority from their boards. When this prevails, the principal can use the authority vested in them as power. Allan and Karleen agreed that any change in board membership and/or at the chair level requires the principal to be adaptive and responsive. When a change to the board or board chair happens, according to Allan, it requires the principal to respond appropriately, and part of this response is to ensure that the new chair or director gets an induction into the nature of governance in an independent school context. In the case study schools it is often the case that board members come from a business background and they need to be reoriented to the education context. This is part of the principal's responsibility. In Karleen's case, a change to the chair of the board required her to make significant changes to how she performed her role; she had to transform herself in the role. Under the new regime, Karleen was expected to perform as CEO with annual key performance indicators used to assess her performance. This was completely different from what the previous regime had expected of her. This required Karleen to draw on her leadership experience and capacities to adapt to the change and continue to be effective in the role. It meant she had to change her leadership to continue to be the 'right fit' for the new regime.

In the traits and qualities discussed in section 6.2.1 required by the case study principals to lead their schools, agility, flexibility and adaptability are to the

forefront. The case study principals require these traits in abundance when it comes to managing their boards.

Educating the board. The case study principals believe it is critical to developing a good partnership with their board, of mutual trust and confidence, that the principal takes the lead in educating the board. Karleen discussed how she had to educate her boards about governance for a school context, with many of their board members coming from corporate backgrounds and bringing different perspectives to the role. Allan explained how he had to educate his board on appropriate measures that could be used to measure success in schools, as the benchmarks, or indicators, used in schools are different from those used in corporations. These principals can take the lead in educating their boards because of their own training and their experience.

Because boards change and directors change, they bring with them their own perspectives about governance and viewpoints about the school's direction and strategy, and as the case study principals discussed, these might not be consistent with the direction that the principal is taking the school. This must be managed by the principal without fracturing the relationship.

Another challenge for the case study principals being accountable to a local board can occur when the board have expectations of the principal or expect them to do certain things that do not align with the principal's own values and beliefs. The case study principals described how their responses to situations of this kind are quite critical for their relationships with their boards. When this happens, the principal must manage this with diplomacy and tact drawing on all their intellect and social competence to navigate the murky waters that this situation produces. Adam took measures to have board members removed because they were not supporting the culture he worked hard to change and then to sustain. He was prepared to put his job on the line to make the point to the board chair that he would not tolerate recalcitrant directors. Adam made the point during the case study visit that it was imperative that the principal and the chair are aligned, if not, then the principal's tenure is tenuous. The principal needs the support of the chair when conflict arises. Ultimately a board has the right to determine the principal's employment conditions which creates a dilemma for the principal; they may have no choice but to either accept the board's *terms* or look for employment elsewhere. The case study

principals would take another option, though, to lead and educate the board, to navigate the board through the challenge.

6.4.3. Priority areas of practice: The importance of high-quality graduates.

These principals purposefully raise parental expectations that their son/daughter can graduate with personal qualities that will enable them to go on from school and to be successful, with meaningful opportunities after they graduate, to take on leadership roles, and to be productive contributors to society. This means, therefore, that the principals in these schools must ensure that the product matches the claims made. The claims made must be more than rhetoric. This component of the areas of practice has two related factors shown in Figure 6.13.

The Importance of High-Quality Graduates	
High parent expectations	Holistic student outcomes

Figure 6.13. Priority Areas of Practice: Factors in the Importance of High-Quality Graduates

High parent expectations. In these high fee-paying schools, relative to the demographic they serve, maintaining prestige is unashamedly about excellent graduate options after year 12, which includes entry to University. It is not an unreasonable expectation from parents given that the public relations and marketing of these schools certainly imply this is the case. On one school's website, *results were nothing short of outstanding*. Another – *the only school in the state with students achieving more first places was Elite School*. These schools purposefully raise parental expectations that their graduates can go on from school and can be society's leaders. *I am confident they will have much to offer in the years to come.* Each one of these principals wants their alumni to serve as a shining example of the kind of people that their schools produce. On their websites these schools list the academic results, the university destinations, the significant accomplishments and destinations of alumni, they share the success stories, all in the hope of convincing parents that in addition to buying an education, they are buying a future of optimism and promise. The school community and alumni expect the graduates of these schools to go on and be leaders, to be highly successful in life after graduation. The

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claims made in the school's public relations and marketing are purposefully made by the principals in these schools. They know that their leadership and their school's programs and opportunities are designed to produce the outcomes for graduates that the community expect. However, it does add to the height of expectation which results in demands on the principal to produce. It manifests itself by putting pressure on these principals to ensure that parents' expectations are being met and that they cater for each individual child. These principals are building an image of a student's future as a means of providing a competitive edge. Parents pay fees and because of this, they have high expectations of the school to deliver excellent outcomes for their son/daughter. Because principals are aware of the responsibility, they must fulfil parents' expectations, they commit fully to ensuring that students graduate with opportunities, and a bright future.

Holistic student outcomes. During the case study visits, when each one of the principals spoke of their compelling purpose, they included in the dialogue an unwavering focus on all students and their learning needs. But they do more than ensure learning occurs at an academic level; they know they are responsible to students as young citizens who are in the process of learning how to be good citizens. They know their work is to ensure students graduate with quality academic outcomes and as young women and men of good civic and social character. During the case study interviews, the principals were able to share their school's leadership and service activities and spoke with pride of the opportunities that are provided to students in their schools. When they talked about their work on behalf of students, they spoke of developing their students to be of good civic and social character as well as academic. Allan's mission on behalf of his students is to ensure that learning at Founders is more than academic; *it's learning who you are, what your role is going to be and are you going to be a good father, a good husband, partner, a good local citizen.*

The principals in these schools have resolved the tension that exists in some schools between a focus on academic outcomes and a focus on holistic outcomes. These principals choose holistic outcomes, at the same time realising that their schools will be judged by the academic results of their students. The case study principals have strategic goals in place that enable them to explicitly make decisions about the educational programs they offer, the courses, the leadership and

community service programs, the co-curricular programs, extensive outdoor education programs, equestrian and cattle teams, international student centres, exchange and overseas tours, supporting and sponsoring schools in underdeveloped countries, indigenous scholarships programs, for example. These strategic priorities are developed from the principal's purpose for the students in their schools and developed to ensure that the young men and women who graduate from their schools are graduates of calibre, able to be fine citizens in the communities where they will live, work and lead. Karen's context is a good case in point; a key priority in her leadership at Waterview is to *provide a rich, holistic experience for her students*. She builds programs that give students broad opportunities, so *they get some idea about what it is to be human, and what it is to be a creative human, and how magical that can be, through drama, sport, and music. To be intellectually and emotionally fit and to be aesthetically aware.*

6.4.4. Priority areas of practice: Managing whole school operations.

The key finding in this section is that these principals know it is their job to provide principled and decisive leadership across all areas of the school. They do not shy away from this or shirk the challenges. What they believe makes them effective is that they lead, and they manage; they have the courage and resilience to provide robust and uncompromising leadership and effective supervision and management. To a principal, they described how they are called to lead and manage successfully across a wide range of diverse areas. The significant areas that these principals must lead and manage in their schools were developed and presented in Chapter Five. It is a juggling act, knowing how to prioritise the competing demands for the principal's time and effort. The areas that must be given proper attention are shown in Figure 6.14. The case study principals know that as CEOs they operate large businesses and the success of the business depends on the principal's leadership and management in all the areas shown. The overriding motivation here for the case study principals is to be able to lead and manage effectively in all the areas to ensure the school's sustainability. They do not see themselves leading in one area, distinct to another, they lead. They shoulder responsibility and accept accountability for the school's performance in all areas. They can identify a challenge, ask the right questions and

seek solutions. This research has found that each one of the aspects of *leading and managing* shown in Figure 6.14 is vital to these principals. Allan will collaborate and listen, but *in the end, there is one person making the decision. Me. We are not a democracy. And I'll make the final call.*

Organisation-wide Leading and Managing	
Leading	Managing
Self	Operations
Staff development	The whole organisation
Student outcomes	Complex relationships
Educational programs	The image and reputation of the school
Change and innovation	The school's future viability
Community	The Christian dimension in faith-based schools

Figure 6.14. Leading and Managing in the Case Study Schools

The strategy that the case study principals use to ensure successful whole school operations is to work hard to ensure that the learning for each individual staff member is geared toward enabling them to enhance the school's overall effectiveness. The principal takes the lead to ensure that all staff know the part they play in: being an advocate for the school; maintaining a favourable public image of the school; providing quality communications with key stakeholders; delivering a good customer experience for parents and visitors; and knowing how to work collegially as part of a team, for example. A principal does this through the dialogue they have with employees, and with their communities through writing they do for the newsletter and other publications, public speeches at ceremonies and events; when leading at the whole of staff gatherings and meetings; and when encouraging staff to be part of networks and broader learning communities. While the principals engaged in leading learning about teaching and learning, they also made sure that their staffs know what was involved in being a large, complex organisation.

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6.5. Chapter Conclusion

This research has found that the claims made in the literature about successful principal leadership only go part way to describing principal leadership in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. The literature fails to get to the core of the nature of the principal's work in independent schools. That work involves dealing with the multitude of stakeholders that impact directly on the principal's leadership; the exacting accountabilities to the local board, the local school community through to the legislative and regulatory bodies; the skills and knowledge and understandings required to run large businesses; the complexities associated with these schools; and the inherent risk of the failure to lead effectively – the viability of the school. This is the bottom line for principals in independent schools. If they fail to lead effectively, which means to sustain viable enrolment levels, then their school's viability is threatened, which can result in school closure. Declining enrolments have a significant impact on budget which in turn impact on financial stability.

The most significant finding to emerge from this research is that effective principal leadership needs the principal to be able to diagnose their leadership context successfully and act in response. G. Morgan (2006, p. 3) claims that "skilled leaders and managers develop the knack of reading situations with various scenarios in mind and of forging actions that seem appropriate to the understandings thus obtained." The principal leadership required to be effective in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia takes more than a cognitive capacity and knowledge and understandings about education and independent schools, it requires a variety of character and leadership traits to reside within the individual, the most obvious one that has emerged being grit.

What has also emerged from the research is that principals leading large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia have demanding and complex responsibilities in their schools, with exacting and challenging accountabilities to a multitude of stakeholders within and outside of the school community who bear influence on the principal's leadership. To enact the role effectively, they are called to sustain rigorous ongoing professional learning which focuses attention to not just the usual requirements of educational and pedagogical leadership but extends to the

full gamut of operations that is the responsibility of a CEO in a large **'not-for-profit'** business. These principals are required to enact the role of the principal in the typical representation of the role found in the literature, and as a CEO of a not-for-profit company, as represented in the literature review in Chapter Two of this thesis. And it is the nexus of these two conceptions that make the role unique in this country. Blackwood (2019) claims that the "role of principal of an independent school in Australia is often compared to that of CEO of an ASX200 company." This research has found support for that claim in not-for-profit companies in Australia. The principal in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia is a unique, complex and demanding role.

It is this sharp edge to leadership in independent schools which makes leadership in these contexts unique in this country. What has emerged from this research is that principals of large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia while meeting all of the expectations held for principals in all systems of schooling in this country are also required to fulfil the role of CEOs as understood in not-for-profit businesses; leading across all aspects of the organisation. This research has found that these principals think that way and accept that this is the role. They believe they have the capability to lead in all areas of the school's operation. Above all else, every day, every interaction, they see an opportunity to lead, they do not shirk responsibility, they accept ultimate responsibility, and their effectiveness is underscored by the courage and toughness they have, to lead.

This concludes Chapter Six. The final chapter in this thesis, Chapter Seven follows and is a discussion of the overall outcomes of the inquiry into effective principal leadership in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia, and presents the major findings from the study, significance of the study and explains the implications for principal leadership research in independent schools.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions, Implications and Further Research

7.1. Introduction

This chapter addresses the main research question, 'what constitutes effective principal leadership in large, autonomous, P-12, independent schools in Australia?' Therefore, the purpose of this study is to learn directly from Australian independent school principals what is so different about their role, when compared to principals in other systems, and what is required to lead large, complex organisations where demanding levels of accountability exist. Reporting on the findings from this study, this chapter will address the significance of new understandings of principalship in these contexts. The chapter will acknowledge the implications for principals of large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia, and aspiring principals for such roles. Also addressed are the specific recommendations for future research, limitations of the study, a discussion of the significance of the leadership framework that has been developed, and a personal reflection on the experience of completing this thesis.

7.2. Review of the Methodology

The mixed methods approach used in this study had two separate but sequentially related phases. The first phase, the qualitative research, used a self-completion online questionnaire involving 72 principals; all of whom lead large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. This number represents approximately 25% of principals leading large autonomous independent schools, judged by having an enrolment of more than 500 students. The first phase of the study informed the second phase of the research, a multiple case study, that involved four principals who are experienced independent school principals and who lead very large, complex organisations. Two of the four principals are male and two are females, one is from a single sex boys school, one is from a single sex girls school, while two are from co-educational schools. The four schools are situated in three states of Australia.

A major component of the mixed methods approach was the qualitative research component, which included capturing the realities of the four independent school principals in multiple case study research. The researcher conducted the case study part of the research in the principals' schools and used narrative techniques (Pepper & Wildy, 2009) to give voice to the principals. A pragmatic approach (D. Morgan, 2014) was taken by the researcher. Data gathered enabled understandings to emerge about principals' leadership behaviours, traits, qualities and practices from the principals' perspectives of themselves and their work.

The chosen methodology was appropriate for this study because it explored in depth the phenomenon (effective principal leadership in large, complex, autonomous independent schools in Australia). Through its emphasis on the perspectives and views of these independent school principals and the experiences and understandings of four principals in particular, this mixed methods research set out to provide insights and views about what it takes to be an effective independent school principal in Australia, a phenomenon that has received limited attention in the research. The review of the literature found that the subjects of the Australian research are principals of Government schools. The review of the literature also found that only two independent school principals have been the subject of any research in this country (Day & Gurr, 2014; Degenhardt & Duignan, 2010; Doherty, 2008b). The research in the international field has also not focused on independent school principals.

The educational leadership literature acknowledges various conceptual frameworks and models for principal leadership (AHISA, 2011; AITSL, 2015; Hall et al., 2016; Kouzes & Posner, 2016). The literature review identified attempts by government education departments, principals' organisations and other education bodies including the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to produce generic leadership frameworks for principals. This research recognises the legitimacy of such frameworks where a general conception of principal leadership is required. The frameworks found in the literature, save for the AHISA Principalship Model (AHISA, 2019), are based on the operations of government schools and systemic Catholic schools. A framework for principal leadership in large, autonomous, P-12, independent schools in Australia has been developed as a response to the overarching research question and is presented and

discussed in section 7.3.

7.3. A Framework for Principal Leadership in Large, Autonomous, P-12, Independent Schools in Australia

The principals of the type of schools at the heart of this research have not been researched in the construction of any leadership frameworks, including Gurr (2009). Designing a framework that suitably represents the complexity of the role and responsibilities was a challenge. The framework presented in Figure 7.1 was developed from the research findings and provides a graphic illustration of the role of the principal in large, autonomous, P-12, independent schools in Australia. Because context is crucial in any discussion of effective principal leadership, it is acknowledged that this framework, while capturing the complexity of principal leadership as informed by the participants, will not capture completely the complexity of principal leadership in all autonomous independent schools. However, situating this framework within the complexity of the context provides a framework which enables a principal to reflect on its relevance to their context.

This framework seeks to model what is required by principals to lead effectively in these types of schools. Where the framework is referenced in the text, *italics* are used. This framework has three main organisers, the major concepts to emerge from the data: *effectiveness in the school's context; distinctiveness of the role;* and *priority areas of practice*. Each of the three main concepts has a cluster of sub-concepts; the sub-concepts delineate the major concepts. Each one of the sub-concepts comprises factors, 32 factors in total across the entire framework. The factors set out the complexities of the role and how the principals enact their leadership to ensure they lead effectively. Chapter 6 contained the detailed discussion of the major concepts, sub-concepts and factors and the inter-relationships between them.

A visual examination of the framework might lead to the conclusion that aspects of the principal's role in a large, P-12, autonomous, independent school is not different to those of the principal in a large order-owned religious school. What makes the role so different are the *Governance* arrangements that exist in autonomous, independent schools in Australia which impact on the principal;

governance arrangements not found in government schools and systemic schools. Boards of autonomous, independent schools ensure that the principal is accountable for *Managing Whole School Operations* on a day to day basis as well as how they implement the strategic directions and ethos of the school set by the board. The board also ensures the principal acting as *CEO* meets all the requirements of a corporation particularly in matters of self-regulation. In these schools, the unique school context has several layers. These layers of context impact the principal's leadership practices.

1. Political. The school itself is a political institution with significant political influences that exists in these schools: federal and state government departments; the state-based associations of independent schools; affiliated churches; the past students' associations and parent support groups. The political context for these independent school principals is unique and not found in government schools or systemic schools.

2. Governance. The school board and governance arrangements that exist are not found in government and systems schools.

3. Parents. The fee-paying parent, paying high fees, is another layer of context, unique to these schools. Fee-paying parents hold high expectations of the school to deliver for their child and they expect the principal to be available and accessible to them.

4. Staff. The school's own community of teachers and non-teachers have expectations of the performance of the principal and can hold the principal accountable through the board.

5. Socio-economic. The socio-economic context means that the principals face quite different sets of opportunities, access to resources and facilities, and different challenges that arise from the socio-economic context that principals must deal with. These factors determine the fiscal resources and income that the principal will have at their disposal to ensure they can sustain excellent educational programs and opportunities for their students.

Governance, political and socio-economic context is represented in the figure as *Effectiveness in the School's Context* and *the Independent School Context*. The autonomous, independent school principal must know their own school's context and shape their leadership decisions, strategies and *Vision* to respond appropriately. As I reflect on this study, if they fail to do this, they will not meet the expectations of the board and school community and this will most surely affect their tenure, which is specified in their contract.

The various layers of context all impact on the principal's leadership and are represented in Figure 7.1 as *Effectiveness in the School's Context.* The autonomous, independent school principal must know their own school's context and shape their leadership decisions, strategies and vision to respond appropriately.

I view the contextual influences that impact on a principal's role and the principal's responses to these as they make decisions, determine strategies, and practices, and set the school's direction, as crucial to the principal's effectiveness.

In this framework, the principal's *Effectiveness in the School's Context* is determined by how astutely they read and understand their school's particular context, which itself is situated within the broader *Independent School Context*, and how well their own *Leadership Context* is shaped and adjusted to be fit for the unique role and responsibilities. The independent school context for these principals is that their schools sit within a highly competitive school market, not just independent schools, but government and systemic Catholic schools. Attracting students and their families to their schools is a significant priority for these schools and therefore an important component of their role.

Being effective for the school's particular context establishes *the Distinctiveness of the Role*, which is the second major concept in the framework. There are four definite aspects to the role which are important to this context, that is *Dealing with Complexity, Sustaining the School's Future, Enhancing the School's Image and Reputation,* and *Engaging the Whole Organisation.* The distinct features of the role results in four *Priority Areas of Practice* that the principal must attend to: *Holding Staff Accountable; Leading and Managing the Board; the Importance of High-quality Graduates;* and *Managing Whole School Operations*. It is these priority areas where the principal chooses to work hard, where they are prepared to focus their action with a clear direction in mind.
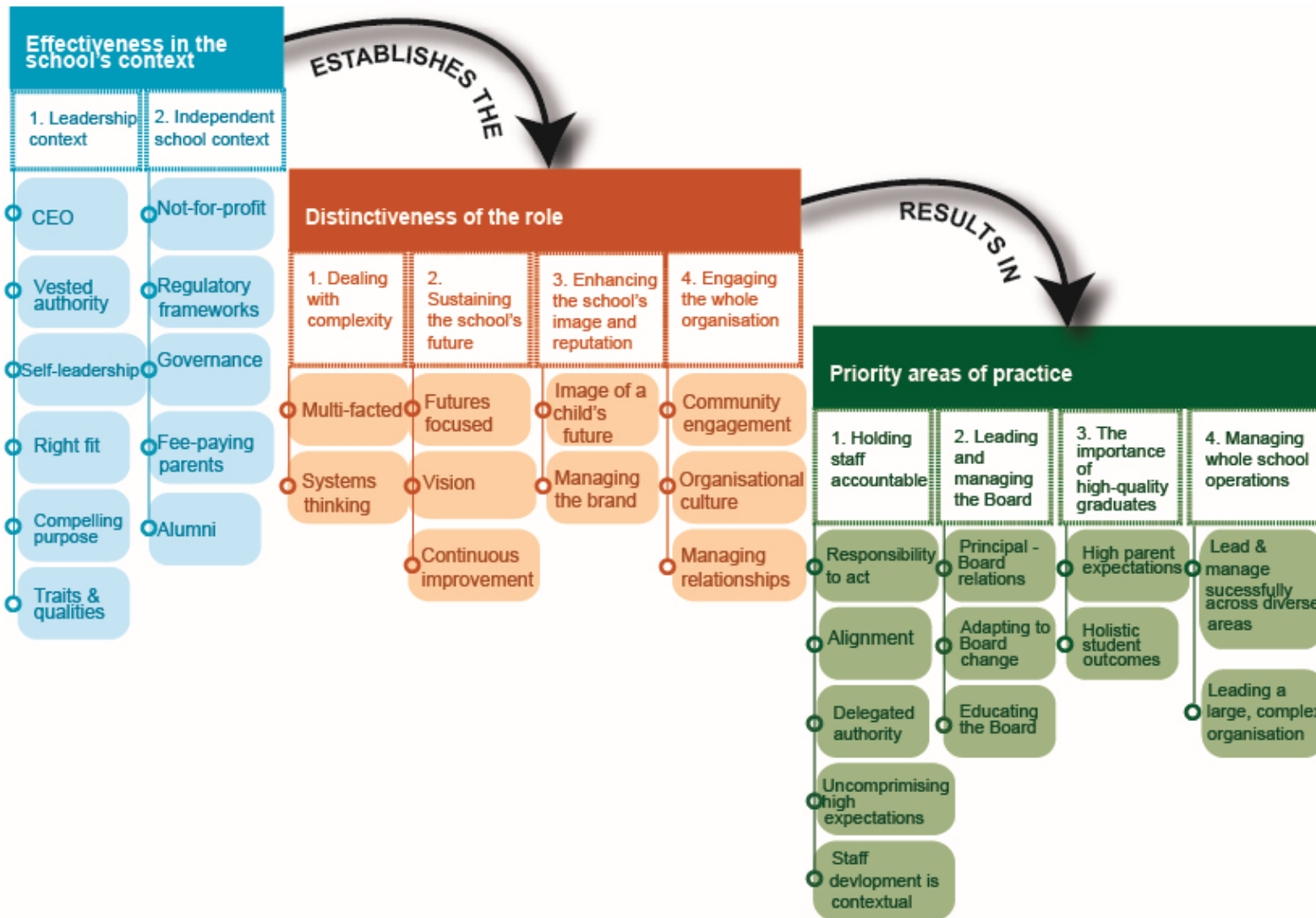
Figure 7.1. Leadership Framework for Principals Leading Large, P-12, Autonomous, Independent Schools in Australia

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The framework provides a conceptual understanding for principals in independent schools of where to focus their energy and effort. Reflecting on the framework as a whole, all of the factors, sub-concepts and concepts, there are two features, *Leadership Context* and S*ustaining the School's Future,* which I draw out for discussion in this section. These are the two areas which have greatest influence on the effectiveness of the principal more so than other features shown in the framework. The significance of these two features is they differentiate the leadership required of principals in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools from the leadership required of government and systemic school principals. All the areas of principal leadership in this framework were developed and discussed in depth in Chapter 6.

1. Leadership context. These principals know that the literature and principal organisations expect the principal of an Australian school to be the educational and pedagogical leader – it is common within the discourse about the role of the principal in this country. The case study principals know that it is at their peril if they do not fulfil the parent and community expectations around the academic outcomes and futures of their graduates. They are also very clear that they must run their schools as large businesses, as a *CEO* of a large not-for-profit company in Australia. If they fail to manage the financial performance of the school and *Manage Whole School Operations* effectively to meet the financial bottom line, their schools are at risk, and can become financially unviable. As a *CEO*, it is the formal contract with the board and *Leading and Managing the Board* and all the expectations that come with the contract that makes this role unique in this country. Ultimately the board members are not-for-profit company directors and they are required to ensure that all decisions made by the principal keep the company (school) viable. Board members have this fiduciary legal requirement which adds to the pressure on the CEO to manage the board and advise responsibly the school's operations and directions. Principals take *Board Relations* very seriously and acknowledge the importance of the formal contract with their board. The impact that the board has on the autonomy and authority of the principal, and the challenges associated with managing the local school board require constant vigilance on the part of the principal in these schools. The relationship between a principal and the board is critical to the success of a school. The tenuous nature of the principal's

appointment is the political context for principals of large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools.

In response to the unique governance arrangements in place and the relationship that exists between the principal and the board, *Adapting to Board Change* becomes an important skill and capability that the principal must have to be able to adapt to the changing needs of the board and to the changing membership of the board, including changes to the board chair. School boards change and new directors bring with them their own perspectives about governance and viewpoints about the school's direction and strategy. Furthermore, as the case study principals discussed, these might not be consistent with the direction that the principal is taking the school. The principal must manage this situation without fracturing the relationship. Another challenge for the case study principals being accountable to a local board can occur when the board has expected certain things to be done that do not align with the principal's own values and beliefs. When this happens, the principal must manage this with diplomacy and tact drawing on all their intellect, social competence and professional skills to navigate the murky waters that this situation produces.

The case study principals take great pride in their work and put high value on their personal and professional reputation. They know that their own reputation and the school's reputation are mutually dependent; one reflects the other. They have high personal accountability; they accept responsibility for themselves, their decisions and actions. They also place emphasis on their personal integrity as an important quality. They relish a challenge, the personal challenges they set for themselves and the challenges given to them by their boards and communities. To this can be added the challenges involved in responding to local, state and federal governments and regular changes that occur at this level.

Principalship in autonomous, independent schools requires individuals who have a *Compelling Purpose*. Their compelling purpose is strategically crafted for their school's context having given proper regard to what is required for their school. Each one of the principals wants to leave a lasting legacy and each wants to implement deep, broad, and long-lasting reforms, while maintaining a link with tradition. Tensions exists between the principal realising their purpose and expectations they have of staff, board, and parents to support the purpose. The

Vision that the principal has for the school is shaped by the principal's understanding of the school's context for its time in history, community expectations, community capabilities and the school's financial situation.

Another significant finding from this research is that *Traits and Qualities* held to be in common across the case study principals enable them to lead their complex organisations. The most significant quality that these principals need for their context is grit. I have taken grit in this research to mean:

> to be passionate and persevere for the long haul and for these principals the ability to persist and persevere when they face obstacles and people who want to find fault in the decisions they make. They listen carefully, take in advice, and remain open to new ideas, but ultimately hold their own compelling purpose and follow it closely.

This is a distinctive feature of their leadership – they know it is crucial to their role that they *Sustain the School's Future*. Their purpose is to be *Futures Focused* and enact that focus through a clear attainable *Vision* for the school. The strategy they use to ensure the viability of the school is to *Seek Continuous Improvement* from all staff and the school community.

2. Sustaining the school's future. From this research I have concluded that *Leading and Managing the* (school's) *Brand* with confidence and adeptness is a crucial aspect of the role. The effectiveness of the principal in this aspect of the role impacts on the school's financial viability. Each one of the case study principals knows it is a crucial aspect of their role to *Enhance the Image and Reputation of the School*, each principal wanted and needed their school to have an excellent reputation that speaks to the quality of their school in the broader community and to the hearts and minds of prospective parents. It is their brand that counts, and their role is to *Manage the Brand* successfully. If they seem preoccupied with this component of their leadership, it is because they appreciate the gravity of the cost if they neglect this – the school's viability. They have made a vigorous commitment to the school's ethos and journey. These schools purposefully raise *High Parent Expectations* by claiming that their school's graduates can get excellent results to enable them to access their desired courses at their preferred university.

These principals spend a lot of time and energy in *Community Engagement*; ensuring that their whole community invests in and supports the principal's

aspirations on behalf of the school. They want to accomplish goals that matter for the "good" of the school; they want to inspire others to join them in working toward those goals. Also, it seemed to me that they will do whatever it takes to help the community be successful, so long as their energy and effort is realised through quality graduate outcomes. It became obvious to me that it did not seem to matter whether they got credit for it or not, so long as their students were achieving quality educational and personal outcomes. They spend time and effort in *Managing Relationships* and cultivating positive affirming relationships with members of the community. They move about their schools interacting and communicating with their people and leading through their presence and every interaction with members of their community.

To ensure that they achieve their priority areas of practice, the case study principals have high expectations of their staff. They *Hold Staff Accountable* and there are robust accountability frameworks to ensure that staff comply and meet these expectations. There is no systemic support if they fail to manage staff performance. They know it is their job to ensure that staff are aligned with the vision; and support the direction of the school. These principals make it a priority to *Manage Whole School Operations* ensuring that staff working across all aspects of the school's operations are focused on the same goals and priorities. They know they must make strong connections with all staff and ensure that *Alignment* is achieved. These roles are complex, and require effective delegation skills to ensure that all of the important work is done and attended to by competent direct reports.

At the core of their work is a heartfelt dedication to the outcomes of all students. Because they know that it is the quality of graduate that 'sells' their school and ensures they have strong, sustainable enrolments to ensure the school's viability. The school's reputation in the community rests with the principal's focus on ensuring *High Quality Graduates.* They have a deep commitment to making a difference in the lives of their students and their communities. They are concerned for *Holistic Student Outcomes*, educating the whole person based on high expectations for all students and having *Uncompromising High Expectations* of all teachers that set and expect excellent student outcomes. The principals in these schools have resolved the tension that exists in some schools between a focus on academic outcomes and a focus on holistic outcomes. From my observations it appeared to me that these principals resolved this tension by working hard to ensure

both outcomes are given priority. They know that their schools, being independent schools, in a market driven competitive environment, will be judged by the academic results of their students and the quality of the graduates. The expectation and anticipation that this creates in the school community manifests itself as real and subliminal pressure on the principal to perform. Rightly, or wrongly, the principal's performance is judged by the annual release of the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR).

Summary. The Framework shows the inter-relationships of factors, sub-concepts and major concepts that model the principal's leadership in large, autonomous, P-12, independent schools in Australia. It is the school's context, the principal's leadership context and the independent school context which establishes the distinctiveness of the role. An important finding of this research is that it is this interaction between leadership and context which requires attentiveness on the part of the independent school principal and to pay close attention to the multiple influences on context. Another important finding from this research is that the fundamental and most important factor in the principal's enactment of the role in any independent school is managing the board and the governance regime that exists and ensuring the school's financial viability.

This study has demonstrated that the principal needs to adapt and refine their practices to the specific context of their schools and manage the tensions that this creates across the multiple layers of the school's operations. How to adapt these findings to the specific challenges facing principals in their own schools determines the effectiveness of the independent school principal.

7.4. Implications and Specific Recommendations for Future Research

This research has sought to contribute, in a significant way, to the knowledge and understanding of contemporary leadership provided by the principal in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. The findings from the research have the potential to encourage and support further investigations into effective principal leadership within local and international independent school communities. The findings have implications for individual principals, the nature of

their work, principal preparation programs, and appropriate professional development and learning programs.

An implication of this research, or a question to emerge from the research is how does a principal learn to be a principal in these schools? Each one of the principals was able to quote authors, books read, and learnings they had gleaned. They work with or seek counsel and advice from a mentor/coach or trusted colleague. They participate in professional leadership networks, collegial and professional associations, and peak bodies. These include AHISA, ISCA and the state based AIS's, for example. They reflect regularly on their performance, their practices, their areas of strength and their areas of development. They use performance appraisals, reviews and feedback and reflection survey instruments to determine their professional learning programs. They engage in relevant short courses and professional development programs, including the AICD Directors course, and courses offered by the CEO's Institute, for example. They attend conferences, professional learning seminars and workshops. They constantly reflect on their decisions, actions and the impact of these on others, and they monitor their own performance. In essence they seek professional learning opportunities that are relevant to their leadership context and they are judicious in choosing experiences that will impact their leadership in their own schools. This could be a focus for further research.

Recommendation 1. That further research be conducted into how a principal learns to be a principal in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia.

An unexpected outcome of this research is that the role of the independent school principal in large and complex organisations might not be sustainable in its current form. This relates to the governance and leadership structure in these schools where the principal is CEO and solely accountable to the board through the principal's contract with the board. This concern was raised explicitly by Adam and Karleen, and implicitly by Allan and Karen. This raises the research question that there might be other models or structures for principal leadership in these schools that are more appropriate in the first quarter of the 21st century, than the current structures, which have been used for decades in independent schools. Principals' work in the case study schools involves long hours and is complex and demanding

in nature. However, the pressures of the role and responsibilities have the potential to take a significant toll on the mental health and well-being of principals in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools. The latest Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey reported in Henebery (2019) found 99.7% of principals work hours far beyond those recommended for positive mental and physical health. As a result, the nation's school leaders are experiencing higher levels of stress, anxiety and burnout (Henebery, 2019). Further research inquiry could explore principal wellbeing in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia, and examine how principals in large, complex schools look after themselves physically, emotionally and psychologically to be fit for the complex and demanding role.

Recommendation 2. That further research be conducted into the sustainability of current models of principal leadership in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools.

This research suggests that studying further independent school principals in action through case study research to gain a deeper understanding and appreciation of the nature of principals' work would support aspiring principals prepare for the demands of the role. This research has shown that the principal's role is complex and demanding with layers of accountability, not just to the board but other stakeholders. How do principals spend their time and energy? A time and motion study of how they spend their hours would be revealing and could provide important lessons for aspiring principals about career development and professional development.

Recommendation 3. That further case study research be conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of principals' work in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia.

Another opportunity for further research is exploring the relationship between the principal, the school board and the chair in effective school leadership and governance, and the characteristics and practices of leadership demonstrated by the boards of independent schools. This research has shown that these relationships and the governance arrangements in these schools is a significant factor in principal leadership in independent schools.

Recommendation 4. That further research be done to explore the significance of the relationship between the principal, the board and the chair in effective leadership and governance in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia.

7.5. Limitations

The context for this research was the independent school sector in Australia. Therefore, the research was limited to principals who lead large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. In the quantitative phase of this research, 72 principals responded to the online survey which formed part of the data gathering; this represented approximately 25% of the principals who met the criteria to be included; they were all invited to participate in the research. The findings from the quantitative research may have been more dependable if this proportion was higher, however the findings were able to inform the second phase of the research.

The quantitative phase found that there are distinct strands of effective principal leadership in independent schools. These strands were identified by the research group of principals as being the most important in their context. Effective principals in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools:

- have a strong connection with the ethos and culture of the school they lead;
- have a passionate belief in the significance of what they do and a belief that they can make a real difference in their school communities;
- focus on student outcomes, basing decisions on what is best for students;
- establish a clear focus on learning and make a genuine commitment to student and community learning;
- provide a strong ethic of care, a safe and supportive learning environment;
- shape a shared school vision, thinking strategically and planning for the future;
- partner with the school board to develop, implement and monitor the school's mission;
- actively build a collaborative school culture in which the mission/vision can be achieved;

- invest in the development of people, and recruit, develop and retain quality staff;
- build high performing teams, provide support and build individual capacity in staff;
- build community and build school capacity to support successful student outcomes; and
- have a particular set of personal qualities (resilience, perseverance, courage and integrity) which buttress their leadership capacity.

The case study research involved four experienced principals, each had more than 15 years' experience as a principal, and each had led at least two independent schools as principal. Each principal had been the principal in his/her current school for at least five years. They lead complex organisations with multiple sub-schools, with an enrolment of more than 1,000 pupils; and more than 100 staff. This narrowed the parameters of the study, but at the same time, it offered multiple case studies that were clearly defined and could provide a foundation upon which further research on principal leadership within independent schools could evolve. The multiple case studies focused on a comprehensive understanding of principal leadership perspectives and viewpoints in a specific school context and situation. When placed within the context of other national and international research of effective school principalship these results can contribute to larger understanding of effective principal leadership. The framework presented in Figure 7.1 represents the findings from this research study and hence its application is limited to the type of schools that were the subject of this research.

Although a rich and detailed description of principal leadership in four large, complex independent schools was gathered, conclusions and interpretations that can be drawn must be kept to the leadership provided in these settings.

7.6. Significance of this Research

AHISA (2011) developed the model of autonomous school principalship. This model was not generated as an outcome of any academic research, alternatively it was derived from discussion within AHISA's membership. It aimed to provide some clarity around what is entailed in autonomous school leadership as perceived by those who do the job (AHISA, 2011). The framework in Section 7.3 is

significant because it provides principals in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools with a model that is grounded in case study research in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia.

Beyond the AHISA model, other frameworks and models of leadership in schools have been conducted in government schools or schools that are part of a system. Comparing this research with previous research in independent schools, this research has generated new knowledge about the layers of context and contextual influences that exist in these types of schools and the impact on the leadership of the principal. The connection of context to how the principal enacts the role has been established and explained in this research and captured in the framework in Figure 7.1. This research has shown that the role is distinct from that in other settings due to the contextual influences that exist. The research has also shown that principals prioritise their time and energy in certain areas of the school's operations and organisation due to the school's unique context. The framework that has been developed is an outcome of this research and provides a visual representation of the complex inter-relationships that exist between these major concepts, sub-concepts and factors.

Research that has been conducted (Gurr et al., 2003; Hallinger, 2018; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010) has shown context matters, however, the research has not been done with regard for the situation and circumstances in which leadership is performed in these types of schools. The findings from previous studies reflect the way the research has been conducted; the scope is too wide. This study narrowed the focus to the group of principals being studied to those who lead large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia.

The results from the quantitative and qualitative research in this thesis can contribute, in a significant way, to the knowledge and understanding of principal leadership within autonomous independent schools in Australia. There have been just two case studies of independent school principals in Australia (Degenhardt & Duignan, 2010; Gurr, 2015).

The findings from this research have the potential to encourage and support further investigations into effective principal leadership within local and international independent school communities. As I reflect on my own journey to this point, a principal of 20 years' experience in independent schools, and all of the

learnings along the way, I would have benefitted greatly from having access to a piece of research of this kind, unique to the independent school sector that described the challenges, demands and rewards of a vital, inspiring and fulfilling role in education in Australia.

7.7. Personal Reflection

For me, the findings from this research have provided some clarity around what is required to be an effective principal in large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools in Australia. I appreciated the perspectives and insights of four successful principals and how they described what was important to them and how they enacted the role. In my view, effective principal leadership is vital for the survival and viability of the independent school sector in Australia. If we are not able to provide quality succession planning for a generation of principals who will leave the sector, then we put at risk the viability and allure of independent schools. It has become apparent to me in completing this research that the principal in an independent school in Australia has a profound impact on the performance of the school as a company, an educational organisation, a business, and as a producer of quality graduates. Principals in autonomous independent schools are the agent for the school's success, and boards have a critical responsibility to choose the right person for the job and ensure the success of that appointment through ongoing support, nurture and development.

What I have learned is how important it is for the principal to have a trusted confidante in their schools, so they do not isolate themselves in their leadership of their schools. For me, that is my Deputy, and each one of the case study principals had one person who fulfilled this role. The recruitment of a few exceptional executive leaders is also vital to the success of the principal. The completion of this research has changed me, and my view of principalship in independent schools. It has heightened my determination to ensure that quality professional development, collegial supports and coaching of principals is readily available to support the vital work they perform for their school communities.

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Appendix A: Questionnaire

By completing this questionnaire, you will be contributing to research that is expected to be of significant benefit to Heads of independent schools in Australia. The data obtained from the questionnaire is expected to generate perspectives from a large number of principals about effective Principal leadership in the context of large, P-12, non-systemic, autonomous, independent schools in Australia.

This survey is in several parts and should not take more than 20 minutes to complete

Personal and demographic detail

[Name]

[email address]

[School]

Governance

Please confirm that your School is *independent*.
[Yes/No]

An independent school is a non-government school which is not run for profit and which has the right and the power to determine its own curriculum offerings and method of operation. The ultimate responsibility for the management and administration of the school must be invested in the school's governing body

School structure

Please confirm that you are responsible for a P-12 (or its equivalent) school
[Yes/No]

This may be across more than one campus.

Demographics

Total enrolment (2015)

[ ] 500 – 999   [ ] 1,000 – 1,999   [ ] 2,000+

Full time equivalent staff (teaching & non-teaching) (2015)

[ ] 50 – 99   [ ] 100 – 199   [ ] 200+

Total recurrent income (2015)

[ ] $12.5M - $14.9M   [ ] $15.0M - $19.9M   [ ] $20M+

Capital expenditure (2009-2014)

[ ] $10.0 M - $14.9M [ ] $15M+

If you have not been able to check each item above; then there is no need to proceed with the questionnaire

Part A – Qualities and attributes of independent school Principals

The literature in the field of leadership, more generally, claims that a leader must possess the following qualities and attributes to be an effective leader. As an independent school Principal, how would you rate these in terms of their relative importance for the leadership provided by the Principal, in an independent school in Australia. Re-order them from the most important to the least important. Place a 1 beside the most important, through to 12, being the least important

A principal of an independent school should -

☐ have a strong connection with the ethos and culture of the school they lead

☐ have a passionate belief in the significance of what they do

☐ place high value on collaboration and value the contributions that others can make

☐ have a clear sense of moral purpose grounded in what is right and proper for the school

☐ be aspirational, holding high expectations for staff and student achievement

☐ have the capacity to see and keep in mind the big picture

☐ have a strong, personal depth of knowledge regarding curriculum, instruction, and learning

☐ have high emotional intelligence

☐ be a confident communicator, a great persuader who can get their message across

☐ have the capacity to empathise, and connect with individual students, parents and teachers

☐ be able to motivate and manage change in an organised, positive, and enduring fashion

☐ value respect, promote personal and professional integrity, insisting on high standards
Are there any qualities and attributes missing from this list, that must be included?

Part B – Practices and strategies employed by independent school Principals

The literature in the field of leadership also claims that a leader must employ the following leadership practices and strategies in order to be an effective leader. As an

independent school Principal, how would you rate these in terms of their relative importance for the leadership provided by the Principal in an independent school in Australia. Re-order them from the most important to the least important. Place a 1 beside the most important, through to 15, being the least important

A principal of an independent school -

☐ establishes a clear focus on learning, for all within their school

☐ focusses on students; bases decisions on what is best for all students

☐ has a strong ethic of care and works hard to ensure a safe and orderly school environment

☐ is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction and assessment

☐ builds high performing teams; they are coalition builders; they like coaching and mentoring others

☐ ensures they are visible and approachable; they make themselves available

☐ challenges practices and behaviours which are not aligned with school values and beliefs

☐ regularly checks the pulse of the school, addressing current and potential problems

☐ actively builds a collaborative, collegial and inclusive school culture

☐ leads change, they challenge the status quo, providing inspiration and energy

☐ work tirelessly on effective communication and community relations

☐ are strategic thinkers, they are visionaries and very good at realising that vision

Are there any practices and strategies used by principals missing from this list?

Part C – Expectations held for independent school Principals

There are a range of expectations held for independent school principals. The following set of expectations have been drawn from the **appointment prospectuses** used by Boards for the recruitment of independent school Principals. In these items, you are asked to respond by identifying the level of appropriateness that you would assign to each expectation of an independent school principal leading a large, P-12, autonomous, independent school in Australia.

1. Highly appropriate
2. Appropriate
3. Neither appropriate/inappropriate
4. Inappropriate
5. Highly inappropriate

A principal of an independent school is expected to

☐ build an appropriate school culture and sustain this culture for the next generation

☐ nurture and cultivate the religious, spiritual or values-laden dimension of the school

☐ meet explicit accountabilities to their parent and school communities, and other stakeholders

☐ have presence; an ability to positively and effectively represent the school to all stakeholder groups and the wider community

☐ engage with the School Board in developing, implementing and monitoring the mission and vision for the school

☐ grow a sustainable enrolment base and ensuring the future viability of the school

☐ ensure that effective strategic planning for the growth and improvement of the school is undertaken

☐ develop the school's distinctive educational programs and sustain the programs through continual improvement

☐ build and sustain a culture of educational innovation involving risk taking and creativity

☐ recruit, retain and develop high calibre staff

☐ protect the school's heritage, celebrating the past and preserving important cultural foundations

☐ ensure that all students are provided with a safe and supporting learning and physical environment

☐ enhance the reputation of the school in the wider community

☐ ensure that the school complies with all state and federal requirements

Are there any other expectations held for principals missing from this list?

You have now reached the end of the questionnaire. If you wish to review or change any previous answers, please select [BACK] at the bottom of this page.

To exit the questionnaire select [FINISH] at the bottom of this page. Please note that when you select [FINISH] this command confirms that you have completed your questionnaire: you will not be able to return to it.

The Researcher, Paul Teys, thanks you very much for the time and effort you have put into completing this questionnaire.

Please log out by closing the browser.

Appendix B: Ethics Approval

OFFICE OF RESEARCH
Human Research Ethics Committee
PHONE +61 7 4687 5703| FAX +61 7 4631 5555
EMAIL ethics@usq.edu.au

29 August 2016

Mr Paul Teys

Dear Paul

The USQ Human Research Ethics Committee has recently reviewed your responses to the conditions placed upon the ethical approval for the project outlined below. Your proposal is now deemed to meet the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007)* and full ethical approval has been granted.

Approval No.	**H16REA200**
Project Title	Leading large, P-12, autonomous, independent schools: An Australian case study
Approval date	29 August 2016
Expiry date	29 August 2019
HREC Decision	**Approved**

The standard conditions of this approval are:

(a)   conduct the project strictly in accordance with the proposal submitted and granted ethics approval, including any amendments made to the proposal required by the HREC

(b)   advise (email: ethics@usq.edu.au) immediately of any complaints or other issues in relation to the project which may warrant review of the ethical approval of the project

(c)   make submission for approval of amendments to the approved project before implementing such changes

(d)   provide a 'progress report' for every year of approval

(e)   provide a 'final report' when the project is complete

(f)   advise in writing if the project has been discontinued, using a 'final report'

For (c) to (f) forms are available on the USQ ethics website:
http://www.usq.edu.au/research/support-development/research-services/research- integrity-ethics/human/forms

Please note that failure to comply with the conditions of approval and the *National Statement (2007)* may result in withdrawal of approval for the project.

You may now commence your project. I wish you all the best for the conduct of the project.

Samantha Davis
Ethics Officer

Copies to: teysp@hvgs.nsw.edu.au