
Theses

2023

The Characteristics of Senior Leadership Teams in High Performing Western Australian Catholic Composite and Secondary Schools

Daniel Michael Groenewald
The University of Notre Dame Australia

Follow this and additional works at: <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses>



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
Copyright Regulations 1969

WARNING

The material in this communication may be subject to copyright under the Act. Any further copying or communication of this material by you may be the subject of copyright protection under the Act.

Do not remove this notice.

Publication Details

Groenewald, D. M. (2023). The Characteristics of Senior Leadership Teams in High Performing Western Australian Catholic Composite and Secondary Schools [Doctor of Education]. The University of Notre Dame Australia. <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses/389>

This dissertation/thesis is brought to you by ResearchOnline@ND. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses by an authorized administrator of ResearchOnline@ND. For more information, please contact researchonline@nd.edu.au.

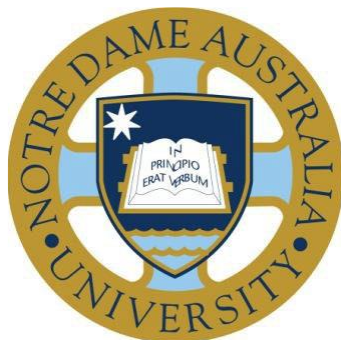


**THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP
TEAMS IN HIGH PERFORMING WESTERN AUSTRALIAN
CATHOLIC COMPOSITE AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

Daniel Michael Groenewald

Master of Arts
Master of Education
Graduate Certificate in Catholic Leadership
Graduate Certificate in Middle Years Literacy
Diploma in Education
Bachelor of Arts (Hons)

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education



School of Education
Fremantle Campus
June 2023

Declaration of Ownership

To the best of the candidate's knowledge, this thesis contains no material previously published by another person except where due acknowledgment has been made. This thesis is the candidate's work and contains no material which has been accepted for any other degree or diploma in any situation.

The research followed the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2018). The University of Notre Dame Australia Human Research Ethics Committee approved this research, Reference Number 2021-089F. Catholic Education Western Australia also approved the research, Reference Number RP2021/22

Daniel Michael Groenewald

June 2023

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions of principals, senior leadership team members, and middle leaders regarding the characteristics of senior leadership teams (SLTs) in high-performing Catholic Education Western Australian composite and secondary schools (CCSS). The study investigated the characteristics that enhanced and inhibited SLTs. It explored the resources and professional learning that could improve SLTs and the role of the principal in the SLT. This research is the first study of SLTs in CCSS.

The study's literature review identified six areas of literature that formed the conceptual framework of this thesis. These six areas were: the concept of a team, the role of teams in schools, the emergence of SLTs, the characteristics that enhance SLTs, the characteristics that inhibit SLTs, and leadership models that inform the principal's role in the SLT.

The results of the study found that the characteristics principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceived supported the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing composite and secondary schools were: positive relationships, shared leadership, emotional intelligence, prioritising vision and strategy, effective communication, availability to middle leaders, an improvement mindset and challenging events that provide a focal point for the SLT. The study also discovered that principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceived several characteristics that inhibited the effective functioning of the SLTs. These characteristics were an excessive workload, interpersonal strain, poor communication and the unavailability of the SLT to middle leaders. This study found that principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceived several resources and professional learning that would support the development of the SLT. These were: retreats, team professional learning, role-focused professional development, individual leadership development and networking. The study suggested that principals, SLT members and middle leaders felt the principal's role in the SLT involved leading as a coach, team builder, visionary, peacekeeper and faith leader.

The research design was qualitative. The epistemology was constructivist, and the theoretical perspective was interpretivism (symbolic interactionism). The methodology used in this study was an instrumental case study. The instrumental case included three SLTs in three high-performing CEWA schools. The research

methods included one-to-one semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, field notes and document search.

As a result of this study, the researcher developed a High Performing Senior Leadership Team Framework that synthesised insights from the literature review with findings from this study. The framework could be shared with key stakeholders who support and develop SLTs. The research also included several recommendations regarding the development and study of SLTs.

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of Karen Rowlands, an inspiring English teacher who took a particular interest in my education and development as a young person. I'd also like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Gary and Anne Groenewald, role models of tenacity, resilience and hope.

Acknowledgements

This thesis has challenged me personally and professionally. However, it would not have been completed without the support of so many generous people. I am incredibly grateful to the principals and research participants from the three schools in this study. The research was only possible with their time and effort.

I am deeply thankful for my principal supervisor, Associate Professor Shane Lavery, at the University of Notre Dame, School of Education, Fremantle. He has been a constant source of encouragement, wisdom, knowledge and prompt feedback. My co-supervisor, Professor Michael O'Neill, has also been highly supportive and a consistent source of rigour and encouragement.

I received tremendous support from Catholic Education Western Australia under the leadership of Executive Director, Dr Debra Sayce. They encouraged and enabled me to conduct this research. I received a Doctoral scholarship to finish the thesis from CEWA. I also received an Australian Government Research Training Program scholarship to complete this research.

I thank several colleagues and friends for nudging me forward throughout this journey. Thank you to Norman Brahim, Dr Shane Glasson, Dr Tony Curry, Dan Wood, Kelly Smith, John Aldous, Matthew Ferrinda, Nick Smith, Dr Laura Allison, Dr Deb Perich, Dr Antonella Poncini, Myriam Caballero De Ward, Loretta Hutcheson, Art Lombardi, Dr Pina Ford, Dr Brendyn Appleby, Dr Ray Boyd, Dr Laurens Manning, Bobby Chopra, Reverend Ben Underwood, Dr Simon Wall and Dr Richard Yin. Thanks to my wife, Helen, and children, Zak and Daisy, for enduring love, care and support.

Table of Contents

Declaration of Ownership	iii
Abstract	v
Dedication	vii
Acknowledgements	ix
Table of Contents	xi
List of Tables.....	xvii
List of Figures	xix
Definition of Terms.....	xxi
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Purpose of the Research.....	2
1.3 Personal Statement.....	3
1.4 Research Questions	3
1.5 Significance of the Research.....	4
1.6 Context of the Research	4
1.6.1 The Geographical Context of Catholic Education Western Australia.....	5
1.6.2 Catholic Education Western Australia.....	5
1.6.3 The Leadership of Composite and Secondary Schools in CEWA.....	8
1.6.4 Case Study School Sites	9
1.7 Research Participants	9
1.8 Research Design.....	10
1.9 Thesis Outline and Chapter Summaries.....	10
1.10 Chapter Summary	12
Chapter 2 Literature Review	13
2.1 Introduction.....	13
2.2 Conceptual Framework.....	14
2.3 The Concept of Teams	15
2.3.1 The Value of Teams in Modern Workplaces.....	16
2.3.2 Team Functions and Team Types.....	17
2.3.3 High-Performing Teams	18
2.3.4 Ineffective Teams	22
2.4 Summary	23
2.5 The Emergence of Teams in Schools.....	23
2.5.1 The Rationale for Teams in Schools.....	24
2.5.2 The Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	25
2.5.3 The Emergence of SLTs in Australian Schools.....	27
2.5.4 SLTs in Catholic Education Western Australian Schools	29
2.5.5 Australian Scholarship on SLT in the 21st Century	30

2.6	Summary	34
2.7	Characteristics that Enhance SLT effectiveness in Schools	34
2.7.1	Effective Team Design	35
2.7.2	The Principal's Effective Leadership	36
2.7.3	A Shared Positive Culture.....	36
2.7.4	Shared Vision.....	37
2.7.5	Clear Operating Norms	37
2.7.6	Skilful Communication.....	38
2.7.7	Professional Competence.....	39
2.7.8	Professional Development	39
2.7.9	Time Together.....	40
2.7.10	Performance Evaluation.....	40
2.8	Summary	41
2.9	Characteristics that Inhibit SLT Effectiveness in Schools.....	41
2.9.1	Interpersonal Strain.....	41
2.9.2	Individualism	42
2.9.3	Contrived Collegiality.....	42
2.9.4	Ineffective Use of Time	43
2.10	Summary	43
2.11	Models of Leadership that Inform the Principal's Role.....	43
2.11.1	Transactional Leadership	44
2.11.2	Transformational Leadership.....	45
2.11.3	Instructional Leadership	46
2.11.4	Christ-Centered Servant Leadership.....	47
2.11.5	Distributed Leadership.....	50
2.12	Summary	51
2.13	Conclusion	52
Chapter 3	The Research Design	53
3.1	Introduction.....	53
3.2	Theoretical Framework.....	54
3.3	Epistemology	55
3.3.1	Constructivism.....	56
3.4	Theoretical Perspective	58
3.4.1	Interpretivism.....	58
3.4.2	Symbolic Interactionism	59
3.5	Methodology	59
3.5.1	Case Study	60
3.5.2	Instrumental Case Study	61
3.5.3	Criticism of Case Study Methodology.....	61
3.6	Method	62
3.6.1	Interviews.....	62
3.6.2	Semi-structured Interviews	63

3.6.3	Focus Group Interviews.....	63
3.6.4	Interview Guide and Process	64
3.6.5	Document Search.....	65
3.6.6	Field Notes.....	66
3.7	Research Participants.....	67
3.7.1	Sampling.....	68
3.8	Trustworthiness.....	69
3.8.1	Credibility.....	70
3.8.2	Transferability.....	71
3.8.3	Dependability.....	72
3.8.4	Confirmability.....	72
3.9	Methodological Rigour.....	73
3.10	Data Analysis.....	73
	Data Condensation.....	75
3.10.1	Data Displays.....	77
3.10.2	Drawing Conclusions and Verifying Data.....	77
3.11	Ethical Considerations.....	78
3.12	Potential Limitations of the Research.....	79
3.13	Research Design Summary.....	80
3.14	Chapter Conclusion.....	81
Chapter 4	Presentation of Results.....	83
4.1	Introduction.....	83
4.2	The Characteristics Principals SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive as Supporting the Effective Functioning of the SLT in High- Performing CCSS.....	84
4.2.1	Principal Perceptions of the Characteristics Supporting the Effective Functioning of SLTs	85
4.2.2	SLT Perceptions of the Characteristics Supporting the Effective Functioning of SLTs	88
4.2.3	Middle Leader Perceptions of the Characteristics Supporting the Effective Functioning of SLTs	94
4.3	Summary.....	97
4.4	Characteristics Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive as Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of the SLT in High- performing CCSS.....	98
4.4.1	Principal Perceptions of the Characteristics Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of the SLT	98
4.4.2	SLT Perceptions of the Characteristics Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of the SLT.....	100
4.4.3	Middle Leader Perceptions of the Characteristics Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of the SLT	103
4.5	Summary.....	105

4.6	Resources or Professional Learning Principals, SLT members and Middle Leaders Perceive Will Support the Development of SLTs	106
4.6.1	Principal Perceptions of Resources of Professional Learning that Will Support the Development of SLTs	106
4.6.2	SLT Perceptions of Resources or Professional Learning that Will Support the Development of SLTs	107
4.6.3	Middle Leader Perceptions of Resources or Professional Learning that Will Support the Development of SLTs	108
4.7	Summary	110
4.8	Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders' Perceptions of the Principal's Role in the SLT?	110
4.8.1	Principal Perceptions of The Principal's Role in the SLT	111
4.8.2	SLT Perceptions of The Principal's Role in the SLT	113
4.8.3	Middle Leader Perceptions of the Principal's Role in the SLT	116
4.9	Summary	117
4.10	Conclusion	118
Chapter 5	Discussion	121
5.1	Introduction	121
5.2	The Characteristics Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive Support the Effective Functioning of the SLT	122
5.2.1	The Characteristics Principals Perceive Support the Effective Functioning of the SLT	122
5.2.2	The Characteristics SLT Members Perceive Support the Effective Functioning of the SLT	125
5.2.3	The Characteristics Middle Leaders Perceive Support the Effective Functioning of the SLT	129
5.3	Summary	131
5.4	The Characteristics Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive as Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of SLTs	133
5.4.1	The Characteristics Principals Perceive Inhibit the Effective Functioning of the SLT	134
5.4.2	The Characteristics SLT Members Perceive Inhibit the Effective Functioning of the SLT	136
5.4.3	The Characteristics Middle Leaders Perceive Inhibit the Effective Functioning of the SLT	138
5.5	Summary	140
5.6	Resources or Professional Learning Principals, SLT members and Middle Leaders Perceive Will Support the Development of SLTs	141
5.6.1	Principal Perceptions of Resources or Professional Learning that Will Support the Development of SLTs	141
5.6.2	The Perceptions of Resources or Professional Learning that SLT Members Perceive Will Support the Development of SLTs	143

5.6.3	The Perceptions of Resources or Professional Learning that Middle Leaders Perceive Will Support the Development of SLTs ...	144
5.7	Summary	145
5.8	Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leader Perceptions of The Principal's Role in the SLT	146
5.8.1	Principal Perceptions of Their Role in the SLT.....	146
5.8.2	SLT Member Perceptions of the Principal's Role in the SLT.....	149
5.8.3	Middle Leader Perceptions of the Principal's Role in the SLT.....	152
5.9	Summary	152
5.10	Chapter Conclusion.....	154
Chapter 6	Review and Conclusions	157
6.1	Purpose of the Research.....	157
6.2	Design of the Research	158
6.3	Research Questions Answered.....	158
6.3.1	What Characteristics do Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive as Supporting the Effective Functioning of the SLT in High-performing CCSS?	158
6.3.2	What Characteristics do Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive as Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of the SLT in High-performing CCSS?	159
6.3.3	What Resources or Professional Learning Do Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive Will Support the Development of SLTs?	160
6.3.4	How do Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive the Principal's Role in the SLT?.....	160
6.4	Broader Themes in the Research	161
6.5	The High-Performing Senior Leadership Team Framework for CEWA Composite and Secondary Schools (CCSS)	161
6.5.1	Preconditions of an Effective Senior Leadership Team	162
6.5.2	The Characteristics of an Effective SLT.....	163
6.6	Benefits and Limitations of the Research	167
6.7	Knowledge Added to the Field of Study.....	167
6.8	Implications of the Study for the Profession.....	168
6.9	Recommendations.....	168
6.10	Conclusion	170
6.11	Personal Impact Statement.....	171
6.12	Addendum.....	171
References	173

Appendix A	Principal: Semi-structured Interview Questions.....	191
Appendix B	SLT Semi-structured Interview Questions	193
Appendix C	Middle Leader Focus Group Questions.....	195
Appendix D	Interview Consent Forms - Principal.....	197
Appendix E	Interview Consent Forms - Consent Form Senior Leadership Team.....	199
Appendix F	Interview Consent Form - Consent Form Middle Leader	201
Appendix G	Invitation to Participate in Research - Principal	203
Appendix H	Invitation to Participate in Research - Senior Leadership Team Member	205
Appendix I	Invitation to Participate in Research - Middle Leader.....	207
Appendix J	Research Participation Information Sheet - Principal	209
Appendix K	Research Participation Information Sheet - Senior Leadership Team Member	211
Appendix L	Research Participant Information Sheet - Middle Leader	213
Appendix M	Sample Letter to Principal Requesting Permission to Conduct Research at Principal's School	215
Appendix N	Research Approval From the Executive Director of CEWA.....	217
Appendix O	Research Approval From the University of Notre Dame Human Research Ethics Committee.....	219

List of Tables

Table 1.1	<i>CEWA Schools by Type</i>	8
Table 1.2	<i>Outline of Thesis Structure</i>	10
Table 2.1	<i>Overview of Chapter Two: The Literature Review</i>	13
Table 3.1	<i>Overview of Chapter Three: The Research Design</i>	54
Table 3.2	<i>Connecting Research Sub-questions to the Interview Guide</i>	65
Table 3.3	<i>Participants Involved in the Study of the Characteristics of Senior Leadership Teams</i>	67
Table 3.4	<i>Evidence of Trustworthiness</i>	70
Table 3.5	<i>Common Features in Qualitative Analysis (Miles et al., 2020)</i>	74
Table 3.6	<i>Example of the Data Reduction Process for Research Question Two</i>	77
Table 3.7	<i>A Summary of the Ethical Considerations of the Research</i>	79
Table 3.8	<i>Outline of the Research Design Inclusive of Timeline and Researcher Activities</i>	80
Table 4.1	<i>Outline of Chapter Four: Presentation of the Research Results</i>	84
Table 4.2	<i>Principal, SLT Member and Middle Leader Perceptions of the Characteristics Supporting the Effective Functioning of SLTs</i>	97
Table 4.3	<i>The Characteristics Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive as Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of the SLT</i>	105
Table 4.4	<i>Resources or Professional Learning Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive Will Support the Development of SLTs</i>	110
Table 4.5	<i>Summary of Principal, SLT members and Middle Leader Perceptions of the Principal’s Role in the SLT.</i>	117
Table 4.6	<i>A Comparison of the Perceptions of Middle Leaders with the Perceptions of the Principal and SLT Members in High-performing CCSS</i>	118
Table 5.1	<i>Outline of Chapter Five: Discussion of the Research Results</i>	122
Table 5.2	<i>Principal, SLT Member and Middle Leader Perceptions of the Characteristics Supporting the Effective Functioning of SLTs</i>	132
Table 5.3	<i>The Characteristics Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive as Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of the SLT</i>	141
Table 5.4	<i>Resources or Professional Learning Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive will Support the Development of SLTs</i>	146
Table 5.5	<i>Principal, SLT Members and Middle Leaders’ Perceptions of the Principal’s Role in the SLT</i>	153
Table 5.6	<i>A Comparison of the Perceptions of Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Regarding the Four Research Sub-Questions.</i> ..	155
Table 6.2	<i>Summary of Knowledge Added to the Field of Study</i>	168

List of Figures

Figure 1.1	<i>Catholic Dioceses of Western Australia Including Regional Offices</i>	5
Figure 1.2	<i>Representation of the Governance Structure of CEWA (Catholic Education Western Australia, 2021c)</i>	6
Figure 2.1	<i>Conceptual Framework for the Review of Literature</i>	15
Figure 2.2	<i>The Ten Characteristics of Effective SLTs Established in the Literature Review</i>	35
Figure 3.1	<i>Theoretical Framework of this Study (Crotty, p. 9)</i>	55
Figure 3.2	<i>Characteristics of High-performing Schools for this Study.</i>	69
Figure 3.3	<i>Components of Qualitative Data Analysis: Interactive Model</i>	75
Figure 3.4	<i>Data Analysis Process</i>	76
Figure 6.1	<i>The High Performing Senior Leadership Team Framework for CCSS</i>	162

Definition of Terms

Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA)	The CECWA are the Board of Catholic Education Western Australia Limited. The Bishops of Western Australia appoint the CECWA. The CECWA oversees the governance and development of Catholic Education in Western Australia.
Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA)	CEWA represents all schools and offices that deliver and administer Catholic education in Western Australia. CEWA implements CECWA's vision.
Catholic Education Western Australia Limited (CEWAL)	CEWAL is the legal company, owned and established by the Bishops of Western Australia, responsible for Catholic Education Western Australia. CEWAL is more commonly referred to as CEWA.
Catholic Education Western Australia Composite and Secondary Schools (CCSS)	The acronym CCSS refers to Catholic schools in Western Australia that educate either secondary students or secondary and primary students. Such schools may include students from years seven to twelve (a secondary school); students from pre-school to year twelve (composite; or students from year five to year twelve (composite).
Middle Leaders	In the context of composite and secondary schools, middle leaders are typically responsible for a small team or leadership of a strategy (Grootenboer, 2020). Some examples of middle leaders in secondary and composite schools include: The Head of English, Head of Year Nine, Head of Wellbeing and Director of Innovation.
Index of Socio-Education Advantage (ICSEA)	ICSEA is a numeric scale that measures students' average social and educational advantage (or lack of advantage) in Australian schools (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2015). The average ICSEA for Australian schools is set at 1000. On average, students from a school with an ICSEA of 1000 bring more socio-educational advantages to their education than students with an ICSEA score below 1000(Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2015).
Quality Catholic Education (QCE)	A framework used to describe the focus of all Catholic schools and offices in Western Australia. The QCE has four strategic pillars or focus areas: Catholic Identity, Education, Community and Stewardship.

School Improvement Advisor (SIA)	An SIA is a senior consultant in Catholic Education Western Australia, often a former principal, who provides principals, and their senior leadership teams, with support and advice about school improvement and leadership effectiveness.
Senior Leadership Team (SLT)	The SLT is the senior executive team that supports the principal in leading the school. The SLT is typically comprised of the senior leaders responsible for at least one significant aspect of the school, such as finance, curriculum, pedagogy, faith formation and staff wellbeing.
The Bishops of Western Australia	The four Bishops of Western Australia are the most senior leaders in the Western Australian Catholic Church (Catholic Education Western Australia Limited, 2019). Each Bishop represents a distinct geographical region of the Church known as a diocese. There are four dioceses in Western Australia: Perth, Broome, Bunbury, and Geraldton. The four dioceses have been working together as one educational entity since 1971.
The Quality Catholic Education School Review (QCESR)	The QCESR is a school improvement review process administered by CEWA. The QCESR focuses on a school's engagement with self-review and school improvement. The principal's leadership is also reviewed separately as part of the QCESR. The QCESR occurs cyclically during a principal's tenure, approximately once every five years.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Principals are the formal leaders of Catholic Education Western Australia composite and secondary schools (CCSS). They are responsible for their school's education program, the spiritual development of staff and students, oversight of school finances and building relationships with their communities (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009; Catholic Education Western Australia, 2023b). Over the past few decades, the principal's role has become increasingly complex, demanding and stressful (Beausaert et al., 2023; Ridden, 1992; Ridden & De Nobile, 2012; See et al., 2022). There are many reasons for this. (Beausaert et al., 2023; Ridden, 1992; Ridden & De Nobile, 2012; See et al., 2022). Principals have become more accountable to government for school performance and leading school improvement (Walker et al., 2013). Many aspects of a school's performance data are now available for public consumption, making principals more vulnerable to public scrutiny (Klenowski & Wyatt-Smith, 2012). Increases in mental health issues for students, teachers and parents have made schools more challenging places to lead (Li et al., 2022; Rajendran et al., 2020). Modern parents have high expectations of schools but are less supportive of school leadership than previous generations (Fyfe & Cook, 2019; Whitaker & Fiore, 2016). Since 2020, Australian principals have led schools through a global pandemic that intensified their workload and stress (Flack et al., 2021; See et al., 2022). Finally, principals are now facing a national teacher shortage crisis (Caudal, 2022).

While the role of the principal is challenging and complex, principals do not work alone. Many principals elect to share their responsibilities with a senior leadership team (Cranston & Ehrich, 2009b; Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Ridden & De Nobile, 2012). In the context of Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA), the senior leadership team (SLT) usually comprises between four to ten of the school's most experienced and skilled leaders. The SLT support the principal in leading the school. They increase the principal's expertise, provide different perspectives on problems and communicate with stakeholders within and beyond the school (Bell, 1992, 2002; DeWitt, 2021; Macklin & Zbar, 2020). SLT members usually take

responsibility for a specific leadership portfolio, such as teaching and learning, pastoral care, Catholic identity, business management, and staff development. Some SLTs, especially those with large student populations, include additional roles focused on community development or the leadership of the primary school or boarding house. Without an effective SLT, the principal's role might be impossible. Without an effective SLT, the principal's role might be impossible (Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Ridden & De Nobile, 2012).

Although SLTs play a vital leadership role in contemporary composite and secondary schools, surprisingly, little has been written about them. SLTs are not a significant focus of the discourse on educational leadership in Australia (Barnett & McCormick, 2012; Cranston & Ehrich, 2004; Cranston & Ehrich, 2005, 2009b; Zappulla, 2003) and the international literature on SLTs is also limited (Benoliel, 2021; Bush et al., 2012; Somech & Freedman, 2021). Principals tend to be the focus of educational leadership scholarship and leadership development activity (Gallin, 2022; Searby et al., 2017). There are few evidence-based professional resources available to grow and develop SLTs. For example, many of the resources of The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) target the leadership attributes of principals and teachers (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2023). Similarly, in the context of CEWA, individual leaders are more often the target of professional development and review than SLTs. Given the importance of SLTs to schools, and the paucity of research and resources to support them, this researcher believed it would be useful to learn more about SLTs.

1.2 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of the research is to examine the characteristics of SLTs in three high-performing CCSSs. The study explores the characteristics that enhance and inhibit SLTs. It seeks insight into the principal's role in the SLT and the resources and professional learning that support SLTs. The study offers the potential to address a gap in scholarly and professional knowledge about SLTs and an opportunity to share insights gained from this research with principals and other stakeholders who support, develop and review SLTs.

1.3 Personal Statement

My interest in this research sprang from my experience as a leadership consultant at CEWA. I started the role of leadership consultant in the summer of 2018. During my first six months in the role, ‘Mary’, an experienced School Improvement Advisor (SIA), asked me if I was interested in working with an SLT in a double-stream primary school. I knew little about school leadership teams. Most of my work focused on individual leaders who participated in professional learning programs. But I said yes to Mary for two reasons. One, the topic sounded interesting. Two, I was embarrassed to admit I knew little about teams. To remedy the situation, I bought a copy of Patrick Lencioni's *Five Dysfunctions of A Team* (2002); and a few weeks later, with Mary's support, I met with the primary school SLT and provided them with some basic professional learning about the challenges and benefits of working together as a team. The professional learning turned into ongoing work with the SLT over the term and some positive outcomes. I was hooked.

Working with the primary school SLT was fascinating. It made me ask many questions about teams. I wondered why some teams gelled quickly while others struggled. Why did my work as a leadership consultant focus explicitly on individuals when these individuals worked in teams? Was there a better way to engage in leadership development that incorporated teams? To answer these questions, I elected to begin this research project. I chose to focus my research on secondary and composite SLTs because they included more team members than primary schools; and, as such, offered a window into the issues discussed in the literature on teams. My decision to focus on secondary and composite schools was also influenced by working as a secondary English teacher for eight years. Over that time, I witnessed some of the challenges principals faced in building effective SLTs and effective school cultures.

1.4 Research Questions

This research explored the characteristics of effective SLTs in three high-performing CCSS. The overarching research question was: What are the characteristics of SLTs in high-performing CCSS? There are four research sub-questions:

1. What characteristics do principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive as supporting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS?
2. What characteristics do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS?
3. What resources or professional learning do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs?
4. How do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive the principal's role in the SLT?

1.5 Significance of the Research

This research is significant for three reasons. First, there is no research on SLTs in CCSS. The study has the potential to add to knowledge in to the field of educational leadership, in particular, the study of SLTs. Second, there is limited recent research on SLTs in Australian schools. This research could be of interest to other SLTs from similar contexts. Third, many stakeholders in CEWA such as SLT members, the CEWA Executive Team, School Improvement Advisors, Leadership Consultants and School Support Consultants, The Catholic Secondary Principals' Association, and The Catholic Secondary Deputy Principals' Association, are interested in supporting and improving SLTs. This research may help these stakeholders better support SLTs, and as a result, improve CEWA schools.

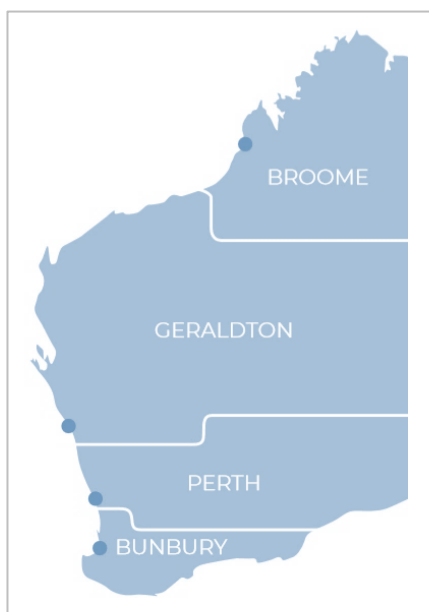
1.6 Context of the Research

Various scholars have noted the importance of context in research (Korstjens & Moser, 2017; Patton, 2015a; Punch, 2009). Patton (2015) observed that "without attention to and inclusion of context, qualitative findings are like a fine painting without a frame" (p. 69). Articulating the research context may help readers and researchers better understand the social, cultural, individual and historical factors behind a research project (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). As such, this research is framed by four contextual lenses: the state of Western Australia, Catholic Education Western Australia, the leadership of CCSS and the context of the researched schools. These contexts will now be discussed.

1.6.1 The Geographical Context of Catholic Education Western Australia

This researcher conducted this study in the capital city of Perth, Western Australia. Western Australia is the largest of Australia's eight states and territories. It covers more than one-third of the Australian continent. Western Australia has a land area of more than 2.5 million square kilometres and a coastline exceeding 12,500 kilometres (Western Australia Treasury Corporation, 2023). As of August 2022, the population of Western Australia was 2,785,300 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023a). Perth's population in June 2021 was 2,192,229 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2023b). A map of Western Australia is provided in Figure 1.1 This map includes the four dioceses of Catholic Education Western Australia: Bunbury, Perth, Broome and Geraldton.

Figure 1.1
Catholic Dioceses of Western Australia Including Regional Offices



Note: Map supplied by CEWA Marketing and Communications Team (2021)

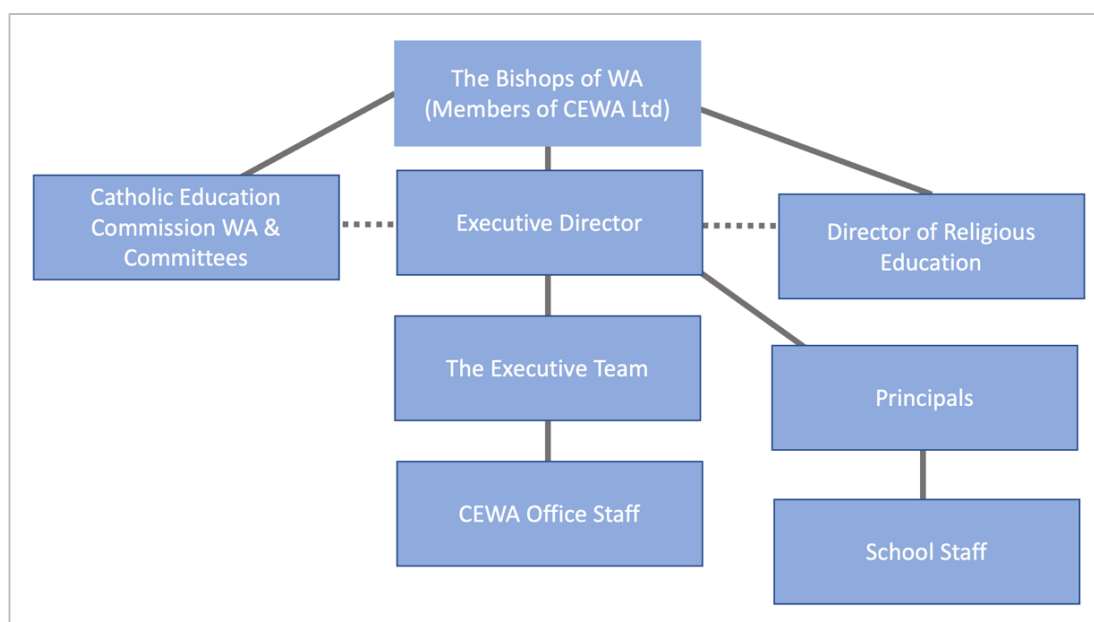
1.6.2 Catholic Education Western Australia

The first Western Australian Catholic school was founded in the Diocese of Perth in 1843 (Pendal, 2008). The founding rationale of Catholic schools in Western Australia was to provide Christian education to Catholic families and evangelise in the community (Catholic Education Western Australia, 2023c; Pendal, 2008). This vision has remained consistent for 180 years. CEWA's 2023 strategic vision is to create a "Christ-centred, child-focused community of engaged learning

environments, inspiring all to actively live the Gospel" (Catholic Education Western Australia, 2023a). This vision is emphasised in all key CEWA documents, especially those focused on school leadership.

In 2023, there are 159 CEWA schools, spread across the four dioceses of Bunbury, Perth, Geraldton and Broome (see Figure 1.1). Each diocese is led by its most senior Church leader, the Bishop. The Bishop is responsible for providing Catholic Education to the Church community. However, the four Bishops of Western Australia delegate governance of Catholic Education to the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA). In turn, CECWA oversees the governance of CEWA and delegates responsibility for the day-to-day running of Catholic Education to the Executive Director of Catholic Education. Today, The Executive Director is responsible for leading Catholic Education in Western Australia with the CEWA Executive Team and supporting office staff. Figure 1.2 provides a representation of CEWA's governance structure.

Figure 1.2
Representation of the Governance Structure of CEWA



Note: Sources for Figure 1.2 are derived from CEWA (2021c)

CEWA Ltd governs one hundred and forty-nine of those. Ten Catholic schools exist as independent schools and are not governed by CEWA Ltd. Of those 159 schools, 50 CEWA schools cater for secondary students. Twenty-one are secondary schools, 24 are composite schools (primary and secondary), and five are

curriculum and re-engagement schools (Catholic Education Western Australia, 2020). Table 1.1 provides a snapshot of CEWA schools by type.

Table 1.1
CEWA Schools by Type

School Type	Country	Metro	Total
Primary	36	73	109
Composite	12	12	24
Secondary	6	15	21
Curriculum and re-engagement	2	3	5
Total	56	103	159

Note: Data for Table 1.1 was provided to the researcher by CEWA Research and Planning Consultant, Gunther De Voss.

CEWA educates about 15 per cent of Western Australian school students. There are 61.5 per cent of students that identify as Catholic; 18.2 per cent of students have a disability, and 4.8 per cent of students identify as Aboriginal (G. De Vos, personal communication Jan 31, 2023).

1.6.3 The Leadership of Composite and Secondary Schools in CEWA

The Executive Director appoints CEWA school principals on behalf of CEWA Ltd. Principals are accountable to the Executive Director for the performance of Catholic schools. The responsibilities of CEWA principals are outlined in several key documents including The Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (2009), known as The Mandate, and the Catholic School Principal Duties and Responsibilities (Catholic Education Western Australia, 2021a). The Mandate (2009) outlines the Bishops' expectations of CEWA schools. It is integrated into all CEWA strategic documents and provides specific directions about the leadership of CEWA schools. For example, it states that:

The principal has ultimate responsibility, under the authority of the diocesan Bishop, for every aspect of the Catholic school's ethos, life and curriculum. All other leadership roles within the Catholic school are delegated by the principal in the spirit of shared leadership. (Catholic Education Commission Western Australia, para 95)

The Mandate Letter (2009) is supported by The Catholic School Principal Duties and Responsibilities (2021) which explains that principals are required to deliver a

Quality Catholic Education (QCE) through four pillars: Catholic Identity, Education, Community and Stewardship (Catholic Education Western Australia, 2021d). Catholic Identity refers to the faith leadership of the school. Education focuses on teaching, learning and curriculum. Community denotes pastoral care and parental engagement. Stewardship indicates school resources, including finances, staff and the environment.

The principal is accountable to the Executive Director for bringing the four pillars of QCE to life. However, most principals work with their SLT to ensure they deliver the QCE effectively in their school. Some principal design their SLT to focus on the delivery of the four pillars of QCE. For example, in some schools, the Head of Mission, leads Catholic identity. The Head of Teaching and Learning is responsible for Education. A Director of Pastoral Care leads Community and The Business Manger leads Stewardship.

1.6.4 Case Study School Sites

The three schools that comprise the case study school sites constitute the fourth contextual lens of this research. Some details regarding the context of the participating schools cannot be included as it may compromise their guaranteed anonymity. The schools chosen for this study were all located in Perth. They include a single-gender school and two co-educational schools. Each selected school met the criteria of a high-performing school (Bush et al., 2012; Crook & Turkington, 2018). They demonstrated high academic results, above-expected student learning gain, and a reputation for stable, effective leadership. The criteria for high-performing schools are outlined further in Chapter Three. The three schools selected in this study had moderate to high Indexes of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA).

1.7 Research Participants

Fifty-one participants from three schools contributed to this study. The participants included three principals, 19 SLT members and 29 middle leaders. All participant interviews were conducted on the school site. At each school, principals were interviewed first, followed by SLT members and two middle-leader focus groups.

1.8 Research Design

The epistemology of this research was constructivist and qualitative in nature. Qualitative research focuses on human perception, understanding, and meaning (Stake, 2010). The theoretical perspective employed in this study was interpretivism, specifically symbolic interactionism. The researcher chose an interpretivist approach because the researcher wanted to better understand participants' perceptions regarding the characteristics that enhanced and inhibited SLTs in CCSS. The methodology used in this study was instrumental case study. Instrumental case study was chosen because the researcher wanted to use multiple sites to shed light on the phenomenon of SLT. The research data was collected via one-to-one semi-structured interviews with the principal and SLT members. In addition, focus group interviews were employed with middle leaders. The researcher also used field notes and a document search. The data was analysed using Miles et al.'s (2020) cyclical process. The data was condensed and displayed as results in matrix charts.

1.9 Thesis Outline and Chapter Summaries

There are six chapters in this thesis. Table 1.2 provides an overview of these chapters. A summary of their contents follows.

Table 1.2
Outline of Thesis Structure

Chapter	Title
Chapter One	Introduction
Chapter Two	Review of Literature
Chapter Three	Research Design
Chapter Four	Presentation of Results
Chapter Five	Discussion of Results
Chapter Six	Review and Conclusions

The research is introduced in Chapter One: The Introduction. In this chapter, the researcher outlines the purpose of the research, personal motivations for undertaking the study and the research questions investigated. The chapter also explores the significance of the research, the research context, the participants involved, the research design, the thesis outline and chapter summaries.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature provides the scholarly backdrop to this research. The Review of Literature includes six areas of literature relevant to this study which included: the concept of a team, the role of teams in schools, the emergence of SLTs, the characteristics that enhanced SLTs, the characteristics that inhibited SLTs, and leadership models that informed the principal's role in the SLT.

Chapter Three presents The Research Design. It explains the qualitative design of the research. This study employed a constructivist approach. Its theoretical perspective was interpretivism (symbolic interactionism). The methodology used was an instrumental case study. The research data collection was via one-to-one semi-structured interviews with the principal and SLT members. In addition, focus group interviews were employed with middle leaders. The researcher also used field notes and a document search. The data was analysed, condensed and displayed, as results in matrix charts, following the cyclical model proposed by Miles et al. (2020).

Chapter Four: Presentation of Results outlines the results of this study. This chapter describes participant responses to the four research sub-questions. The results include thick descriptions of qualitative data from the three participant groups: principals, SLT members, and middle leaders. The differences between participants' perceptions of the research sub-questions are outlined, and key themes are presented. The thematised data is represented in matrix charts.

Chapter Five: The Discussion examines and discusses the significance of the study's results. The literature review is discussed in relation to the results. Research field notes are discussed to provide further context to the results and key themes regarding the four research sub-questions are described. The researcher discusses characteristics that enhance and inhibit the SLT's; resources or professional learning that aid the development of the SLTs and leadership models related to the principal's role in the SLT.

Chapter Six: Review and Conclusion summarises the research. It answers the overarching research question regarding the characteristics of SLTs and addresses the four research sub-questions. The researcher introduces the High Performing Senior Leadership Team Framework which provides a graphic synthesis of the research including insights from the Review of Literature, Discussion of Results, field notes and document search. Chapter Six notes broader themes in the research, the benefits and limitations of the research and provides a summary of knowledge added to the field. Finally, the chapter provides eight recommendations regarding the

research on SLTs. It concludes by summarising the study and discussing the impact of this thesis on the profession.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the research. The researcher outlined the purpose of the study, personal motives, research questions, significance of the research, the research context, participants involved and the research design. It also provided a summary of the six chapters. The next chapter is the Review of Literature. The Review of Literature will help position this study in relation to the extant literature on SLTs.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to study the characteristics of senior leadership teams (SLTs) in three high-performing CEWA composite and secondary schools (CCSS). To address this aim, the researcher examined six areas of literature. The six areas of literature included: the concept of a team, the role of teams in schools, the emergence of SLTs, the characteristics that enhance SLTs, the characteristics that inhibit SLTs, and leadership models that inform the principal's role in the SLT. Table 2.1 presents an overview of the literature review.

Table 2.1

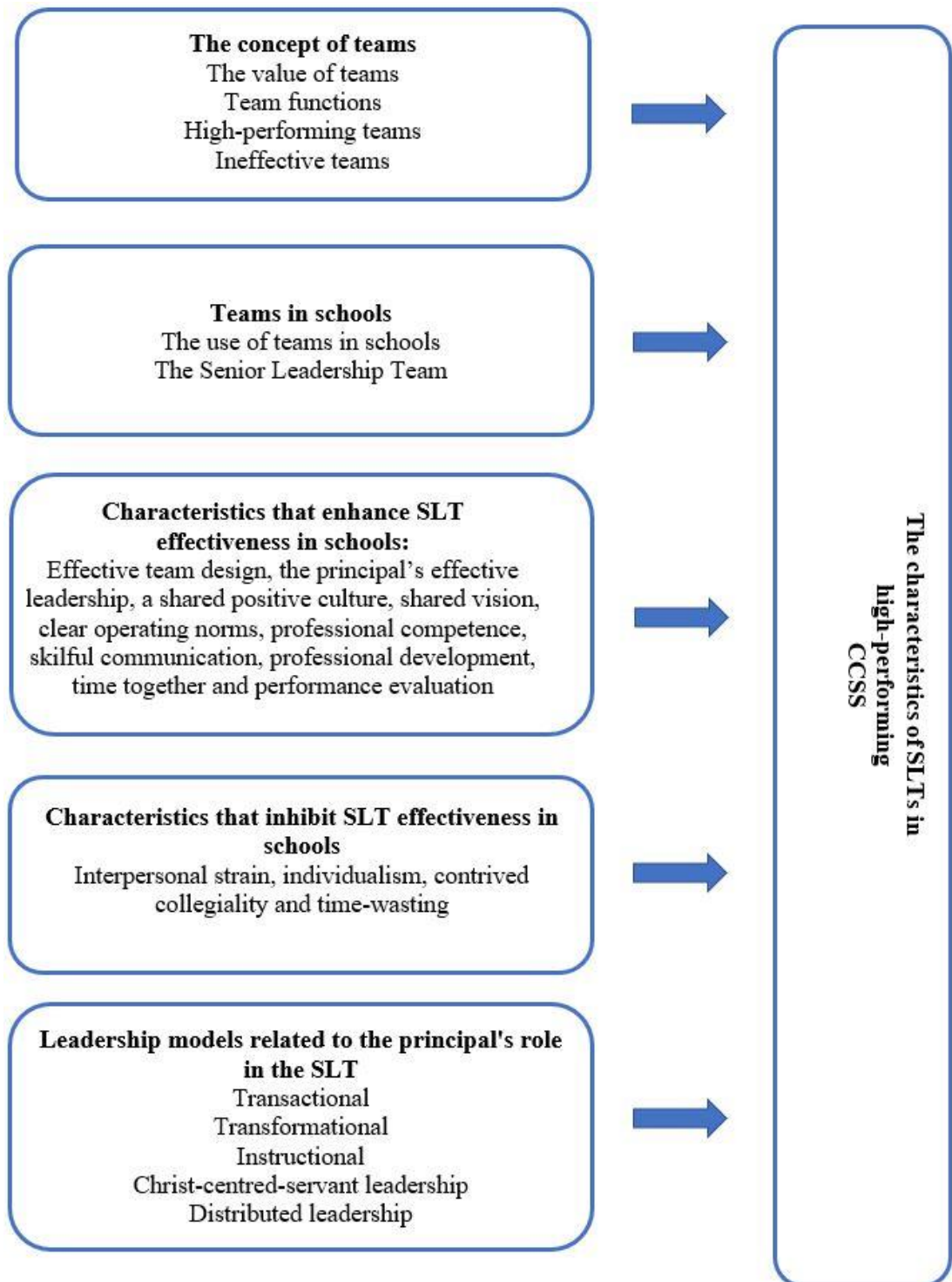
Overview of Chapter Two: The Literature Review

2.1	Introduction
2.2	Conceptual framework
2.3	The concept of teams
2.4	Summary
2.5	The role of teams in schools
2.6	Summary
2.7	The emergence of the SLT
2.8	Summary
2.9	Characteristics that enhance SLT effectiveness in schools
2.10	Summary
2.11	Characteristics that inhibit SLT effectiveness in schools
2.12	Summary
2.13	Leadership models related to the principal's role in the SLT
2.14	Summary
2.15	Conclusion

2.2 Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual Framework, as outlined in Figure 2.1 addressed themes relevant to the overarching research question: What are the characteristics of SLTs in high-performing CCSS? The first area of the literature review examined was the concept of teams. This section explored types of teams, the value of teams in workplaces, effective or high-performing teams, and ineffective teams. The second area of the literature review explored the use of teams in schools and the emergence of the executive or senior leadership team as a school leadership function. The third area of the literature review explored the emergence of SLTs in Australian schools. This section examined how Australian educational scholars interpreted the arrival of SLTs in schools. The fourth area of the literature review explored characteristics that enhance SLT effectiveness in schools. These characteristics included: effective team design, the principal's effective leadership, a shared positive culture, shared vision, clear operating norms, professional competence, skilful communication, professional development, time together and performance evaluation. The fifth area of the literature review outlined the characteristics that inhibit SLTs. These characteristics included: interpersonal strain, individualism, contrived collegiality and time-wasting. The sixth and final area of the literature framework described leadership models relevant to the principal's role in the SLT. These leadership models included: transactional leadership, transformational leadership, instructional leadership, Christ-centred-servant leadership and distributed leadership. Figure 2.1 graphically presents the conceptual framework for the review of the literature.

Figure 2.1
Conceptual Framework for the Review of Literature



2.3 The Concept of Teams

The discussion of teams in education has been highly influenced by the disciplines of management, social psychology, and organisational studies (Cardno &

Tetzlaff, 2017; Somech & Drach-Zahavy, 2007). As such, this Review of Literature begins by outlining several foundational concepts regarding the conceptualisation of teams in these disciplines. The first section of the literature review defines the concept of a team, team functions and types, the value of teams in workplaces and differences between high-performing and ineffective teams. Once these foundational concepts have been outlined, the chapter will explore the approach of educational scholars to teams in schools, focusing on senior leadership teams (SLTs).

Most teams scholars agree that a team is a group of people working together to achieve a common goal (Bang & Midelfart, 2021; Dalglish & Miller, 2016; Hill, 2019; Kakabadse et al., 2004; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). Some scholars further distinguish between teams and groups (Dalglish & Miller, 2016; Goodall, 2013; John Katzenbach & Douglas Smith, 1993; Whitmore, 2017). Groups are comprised of people who do independent work but come together to share their results (Dalglish & Miller, 2016). Teams are more interactive than groups and committed to shared, measurable goals (Dalglish & Miller, 2016; Whitmore, 2017). Teams have more potential than groups for problem solving and high productivity. For Bang and Midelfart (2021), becoming a team is aspirational. A group can become a team when it displays common goals and interdependence (p. 21). Team members can achieve synergy when they combine their efforts in pursuit of a common goal (Covey, 2004; Kakabadse et al., 2004).

2.3.1 The Value of Teams in Modern Workplaces

Modern organisations rely on teams (Dalglish & Miller, 2016; Deloitte, 2016; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Sandahl & Phillips, 2019). Teams are said to improve problem-solving and productivity (Dalglish & Miller, 2016; Deloitte, 2016; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006; Sandahl & Phillips, 2019). For Whitmore (2017), teams “perform tasks that are interconnected and too time-consuming for an individual or too complex or difficult for a group of individuals working in parallel” (p. 171). Chapman (2020) noted that teams are necessary to complete complex procedures. For example, a single, skilled person does not have the capacity or capability to fight a large fire, fly a commercial aeroplane or perform a complex medical operation. But a team does. Team members working together have greater access to resources, perspectives, skillsets and brainpower than the same number of individuals working alone (Hill, 2019; Jon Katzenbach & Douglas Smith, 1993). Teams are also valued in

the workplace because they can strengthen morale (Hill, 2019; Sandahl & Phillips, 2019; Whitmore, 2017).

Teams are a massive topic of interest in popular management and business literature (Bang & Midelfart, 2021). Every year a new book proclaims the secret ingredients of high-performing teams (Dyer & Dyer, 2020; Eastwood, 2022; Kapitulik & MacDonald, 2019). Such an approach can make it sound like teams are a new to humanity. This is not the case (Eastwood, 2022; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006). (Dyer & Dyer, 2020; Eastwood, 2022; Kapitulik & MacDonald, 2019). Teams, as Kozlowski and Ilgen (2006) noted, have been a central feature of “human social organization ever since our ancient ancestors first banded together to hunt game, raise families, and defend their communities” (p. 77). While other animals engage in teaming behaviours, especially to avoid predators, they have not achieved the same levels of collaboration as human being (Harari, 2014; Yong et al., 2021). The capacity of humans to form effective teams has enabled the human them to progress from hunter-gatherers to space travellers (Yong et al., 2021).

2.3.2 Team Functions and Team Types

Teams have many functions in the modern organisations (Dalglish & Miller, 2016; Hill, 2019). There are teams that recommend things (audit groups, safety groups), teams that produce things (manufacturing teams, marketing, sales) and teams that run things (executive teams, events teams) (Hill, 2019; John Katzenbach & Douglas Smith, 1993). Dalglish (2016) describes four types of teams: functional, cross-functional, self-managed, and virtual teams. Functional teams are grouped by subject matter expertise (e.g., finance, human resources, marketing). Cross-functional teams are made up of members from different functional groups and are used to solve specific problems. Self-managed teams can be functional and cross-functional and are responsible for leading themselves. Virtual teams are connected via technology and operate from different locations and time zones. They can access an organisation's best talent across the globe without incurring the cost of travel (Hill, 2019). Virtual teams have been much more widespread in work since the advent of the 2020 global COVID-19 pandemic (Lechner & Mortlock, 2022). However, virtual teams have their own challenges. In the absence of physical face-to-face contact, virtual teams can lack the kinds of social connection and strong

relationships associated with high-performing face-to-face teams (Lechner & Mortlock, 2022).

The seminal work of Katzenbach and Smith (1993) identified five types of teams in modern organisations. They include: working group, pseudo team, potential team, real team and a high-performing team. A working group comprises competent team members who share information but do not necessarily interact or produce the same products or services. A pseudo-team lacks a common purpose or performance goals and is worse off when trying to act like a team. A potential team has a common purpose but requires support to establish collective accountability. A real team is a successful team that has set a common purpose, goals and mutual accountability. Finally, a high-performing team includes all features of a real team but also includes team members who help each other succeed. High-performing teams consistently outperform other teams and exceed team expectations.

2.3.3 High-Performing Teams

High-performing teams have garnered much interest in various disciplines from management to business and sport (Coyle, 2018; Humphrey & Damian, 2021; Sandahl & Phillips, 2019; Walker, 2018). Knowing how to develop high-performing teams is a much-valued skill that can increase productivity, profit and social status. Several scholars have identified specific conditions that support high-performing teams (Coyle, 2018; Eastwood, 2022; Franz, 2012; Hackman, 1990; Hackman, 2002; Walker, 2018). These conditions are sometimes expressed through an input, process, output model (IPO) (Franz, 2012; Hackman, 1990). High-performing teams will likely include inputs such as competent, skilled team members and adequate resourcing to complete a team's task (Franz, 2012; Sandahl & Phillips, 2019). The processes that support high-performing teams comprise frequent meetings, feedback and support, professional development and team coaching (Hackman, 2002; Hill, 2019; Katzenbach, 2018; Sandahl & Phillips, 2019). Finally, the outputs of a high-performing team include a product or service valuable to clients, individual team member improvement, and whole team improvement (Hackman, 2012).

Hackman (2012) described six conditions of an effective or high-performing team. First, he argued, the team must be a "real team" (p. 436). A real team has defined members who work together to produce a product or service. Second, the team has a "compelling purpose" that energises the group and focuses the work (p.

437). Third, the team has the "right people" with the right skills to create the product or service (p. 437). Fourth, the team has "clear norms of conduct" that define acceptable and unacceptable behaviours, which are reinforced by the team (p. 436). Fifth, the team works in a "supportive organisational context" that adequately resources the team, rewards the team and develops the team (p. 437). Sixth, the team receives "team-focused coaching" so that it stays focused on its goals (p. 437). For Hackman (2012), the leader's job is to monitor these conditions by setting its direction and maintaining the team's success.

High-performing teams are rare (Dalglish & Miller, 2016; John Katzenbach & Douglas Smith, 1993; Lencioni, 2002). Sandahl and Philips (2019) found that less than ten per cent of the teams they worked with identified as high-performing. Lencioni (2002) lamented that "teams, because they are made up of human beings, are inherently dysfunctional" (p. vii). The world of sports includes many examples where the selection of superstars does not result in high-performance (Eastwood, 2022; Walker, 2018). Sandahl and Philips (2019) found that less than ten per cent of the teams they worked with identified as high-performing. Lencioni (2002) lamented that "teams, because they are made up of human beings, are inherently dysfunctional" (p. vii). The world of sports includes many examples where the selection of superstars does not result in high-performance (Eastwood, 2022; Hill, 2019; Walker, 2018). Several successful sports coaches the importance of developing high-quality processes to improve teams (Eastwood, 2022; Humphrey & Damian, 2021; Walsh, 2009). For example, Coyle (2018), in his comparison of high-performing teams from the military to sports, found that most high-performing teams focus on processes like building safety between team members, sharing vulnerability and establishing purpose. Walker (2018) identified that the most successful sports teams of all time had one unique characteristic: they were all led by captains who led with humility and service. Most team scholars agree that people require effective leadership to connect as a team (Eastwood, 2022; Walker, 2018). Eastwood (2022) argued that creating high-performing teams was not a linear process and involved connecting the group to shared values and understanding the diversity of the team members.

Several recent studies on effective teams and effective work cultures have suggested that high-performing teams are cultivated through processes that develop psychological safety (Clark, 2020; Coyle, 2018; Delizonna, 2017; Duhigg, 2016;

Eastwood, 2022; Edmondson, 2018). Psychological safety refers to the notion that team members feel safe being themselves at work and contributing ideas to the team without fearing punishment (Delizonna, 2017; Edmondson, 2018). The best teams build processes that support team members to feel included, safe to learn, safe to use their skills and challenge existing practices (Clark, 2020). Google, a technology company, found that its most effective teams comprised team members giving each other equal speaking times in meetings (Duhigg, 2016). Pentland (2013) discovered that high-performing teams were better than lower-performing teams at listening to each other, maintaining eye contact, sharing information and carrying on work conversations outside meetings. According to Pentland (2013), "the best way to build a great team is not to select individuals for their smarts or accomplishments but to...shape and guide the team so that it follows successful communication patterns" (p. 5).

Teams that lack psychological safety can underperform and fall prey to groupthink (Janis, 1991). Groupthink is the notion that team members can become so protective of a team's ideas that they fail to listen to other team members, especially those who are critical of the team's ideas (Janis, 1991). The case of the Space Shuttle Challenger, which blew up shortly after its launch in 1986, killing seven astronauts, is often cited as an example of groupthink (Janis, 1991; Kakabadse et al., 2004; Passer & Smith, 2021). The engineering team responsible for the Shuttle's launch was under intense deadline pressure and consequently dismissed issues about the rocket's safety. To counter groupthink, scholars argue that teams should develop a culture open to different viewpoints (Coutu, 2013). In an interview with team scholar, Richard Hackman, Hackman argued that "every team needs a deviant, someone who can help the team by challenging the tendency to want too much homogeneity" (Coutu, 2013, p. 27). Nurturing the psychological safety of a team allows team members to feel comfortable enough to have the difficult conversations necessary for a team to reach its potential (Eastwood, 2022; Scott, 2019). Successful teams build cultures that enable unwelcome news to be shared and addressed (Clark, 2020; Edmondson, 2018).

To create high-performing teams, many scholars have stressed the importance of helping employees feel comfortable and a sense of belonging in the workplace (Clark, 2020; Edmondson, 2018). Some workplaces have supported this idea by creating attractive and supportive work environments. For example, some advantages

of working at the technology company Google include free food, fitness classes, sleeping pods, unlimited dry cleaning, video game stations and table sports (Isaacs, 2022). Helping employees feel comfortable at work may help establish comfort, safety, and status in a group. However, some scholars have also noted that comfort is not a precondition for high-performing teams.

Some teams flourish under stress. Bastian (2018) and Chapman (2020) found that aversive experiences can help teams become more cohesive, creative and resilient. Similarly, Thompson and Kusy (2021) suggested that the positive response of team leaders to adversities such as the COVID-19 crisis helped their teams function effectively. A study of collective resilience in Southern Africa reported that when faced with social crises, Southern African communities “flocked” together to provide a “buffer” against a threatening environment (Ebersöhn et al., 2018, p. 335). Recent natural disasters in Australia, such as the 2022 floods in northern New South Wales, demonstrate that in addition to significant trauma, community response to the trauma of the floods created collective responsibility, empathy and unity (The State of New South Wales, 2022). Likewise, a recent study of COVID-19s effects on schools and school leadership suggested COVID-19 brought school communities together (Flack et al., 2021).

High-performing teams take time to develop. Dalglish and Miller (2016) commented that "building teams is not for the faint-hearted. it is hard work for teams to move through the various stages and leaders must react correctly at each stage of the team's development" (p. 253). Tuckman's (1965) seminal research on group development showed that effective teams require time to mature and perform. Tuckman argued that teams go through four phases of development: forming, storming, norming and performing. Forming refers to the initial interactions as a group comes together as a new team. Storming refers to the process of establishing relationships and boundaries in the team. Norming designates agreement on roles, responsibilities and ways of working. Finally, performing articulates the smooth running of the team due to progression through the previous stages.

Sharing sustained quality time together can help a team become high-performing. For example, Hackman (2002) found that aeroplane crews that had been together longer were less likely to have mishaps. Katzenbach and Smith (1993) argued that effective teams took time to become effective. Eastwood (2022) argued

that teams perform best when they take the time to learn about each individual team member and their personal stories.

2.3.4 Ineffective Teams

Many teams are ineffective (Coutu, 2013; Hackman, 2002). Some teams are ineffective because the team members do not trust each other, fear conflict, have low commitment or poor accountability (Lencioni, 2002). A team may fail because it does not have enough skilled members or the wrong members. Hackman (2002) argued that teams could struggle because of poor design and poor leadership. Some teams "lose the ability to see the underlying factors that made their team success in the first place" (Dalglis & Miller, 2016, p. 64). Some teams are ineffective because they lack a shared vision, task structure, clear team membership, norms of behaviour and effective leadership (Dalglis & Miller, 2016). Felps et al. (2006) found that by withholding effort, expressing negative emotions and violating interpersonal norms, one toxic team member can destroy group cohesion. Toxic team members inhibit team performance, particularly cooperation and creativity. Likewise, research by Porath et al. (2015) found that incivility in teams increased errors and damaged morale. Teams can also fail because they need more effective processes (Kakabadse, 2004). For example, teams may meet infrequently, have disorganised meetings, or lack productivity. Kakabadse (2004) noted that teams could fail because they need more organisational resources, professional development, incentives, better IT systems and resources. Some modern work practices only reward individual achievement and thereby discourage teamwork (Kakabadse, 2004; Kozlowski & Ilgen, 2006).

Senior leadership teams have their own challenges (Bang & Midelfart, 2021; Coutu, 2013; Wageman et al., 2008). Senior leaders are used to leading their own teams and can struggle to act effectively as followers and team players (Coutu, 2013; Katzenbach & Smith, 2013; Wageman et al., 2008). Dalglis and Miller (2016) commented that: "over years of consulting, we have seen senior executive teams that cannot operate effectively because of jealousy, big egos and, in many cases, a simple lack of knowledge about team dynamics" (p. 254). Wageman et al. (2008) found that only a quarter of the 120 senior leadership teams she studied performed well. Senior leadership teams are difficult to lead because members pursue individual agendas (Wageman et al., 2008). Hackman remarked that "often the CEO is responsible for

the fuzziness of team boundaries...fearful of seeming exclusionary...the chief executive frequently creates a dysfunctional team" (Coutu, 2013, p. 22).

2.4 Summary

This section of the literature review focused on the concept of a team, its function in modern workplaces, and the characteristics of high-performing and low-performing teams. A team was defined as a group of skilled people brought together to achieve a common goal (Hill, 2019; Northouse, 2019). Teams were described as useful in workplaces because they can use the skills and ideas of many team members to solve problems. Teams that work well together can be considered effective or high performing. High-performing teams are likely to include skilled members who share clear goals and psychologically safe cultures. Low-performing teams typically have low trust and negative team members. Teams composed of senior leaders may struggle to be effective because they carry their own organisational agendas, which may be at odds with the teams. Some characteristics that inhibited teams included poor design, toxic team members, low trust and low accountability. Now that the researcher has established several foundational team concepts, the next section will focus on the scholarly approach to teams in schools. The next section will examine the emergence of teams in schools, the development of senior leadership teams in secondary and composite schools and the characteristics that enhance and inhibit SLTs.

2.5 The Emergence of Teams in Schools

Traditionally, teams and teaming have not had a prominent role in Australian schools. For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, classroom teaching was a solo act, and there was no apparent reason to team up with other teachers (Campbell & Proctor, 2014). To some extent, teaching has remained a highly independent profession. For example, in the context of many secondary schools, it is still the case that one individual teaches a class of approximately 30 students. Teacher independence is not unique to Australian schools. More broadly, the "privacy" of classrooms, and the "isolation of teachers from each other" has been a common feature of the teaching profession (Fullan, 2019, p. 74). However, since the 1990s, the education profession has become more open to the idea of using teams in schools, especially outside the classroom, through activities like curriculum

planning, student assessment, school administration and professional learning (Ridden & De Nobile, 2012).

There are now many teams in modern secondary and composite schools. Some of these teams include discipline-based teams (e.g., English, Mathematics, Religious Education), year-level teams (e.g., Years 7, 8, 9), pastoral teams (e.g., psychologists, educational support), student services teams, instructional teams, professional learning communities, finance teams, human resources teams, marketing and community development teams (Benoliel & Berkovich, 2017; Freedman & Somech, 2021). Moreover, the education profession has also embraced several team-based concepts such as collaboration, distributed leadership and collective efficacy (Donohoo et al., 2018; Fullan & Quinn, 2016; Hargreaves, 2019; Hattie, 2015b; Hattie & Smith, 2020; Leithwood et al., 2008).

2.5.1 The Rationale for Teams in Schools

The arguments for the benefits of teams in schools have mirrored those used in management, social psychology, organisational studies and business. For example, Benoliel and Berkovich (2017) argued that “teams are necessary [in schools] to address complex problems and deal with subject matter that cannot be adequately addressed through an individual alone” (p. 923). Various scholars have pointed out that school teams promote morale, inclusivity and the growth and development of teachers (Bell, 1992, 2002; DeWitt, 2021; Oswald, 1996; Somech & Freedman, 2021; Sparks, 2013; Stott & Walker, 1999; Walker, 1994). Several scholars have argued that a more team-oriented approach can benefit students and teachers (Kirtman, 2014; Ridden, 1992; Sparks, 2013). Other scholars have commented that teams can increase productivity and teacher agency (Cranston & Ehrich, 2005; Drach-Zahavy & Somech, 2002).

The literature on teams in schools is optimistic about the capacity of teams and teamwork to lead school improvement. Sparks (2013) argued that “schools rise and fall...[based] on the quality of teamwork that occurs within their walls” (p. 28). He commented that schools would only improve when “every leader and every teacher is a member of one or more strong teams” (p. 28). Macklin and Zbar (2020) saw shared leadership and a strong united senior leadership team as a precondition of school improvement. DeWitt (2021) contends that teacher efficacy is enhanced through working in teams. Freedman and Somech (2021) noted that teams could be

employed to improve student achievement, school climate, teacher satisfaction, teaching quality and school improvement.

The literature on school teams is positive about the difference teams can make to school improvement. Power (2019) commented: "teachers today aren't expected to be experts in everything; they're more often part of dynamic teams that combine their experiences, skills, and passions to elevate everyone's learning" (p. 77). However, as Freedman and Somech (2021) have noted, some of the literature on teams has ignored the potential disadvantages of teamwork. Teamwork is not always the most effective way to complete a task. For example, some people minimise their effort once they know other people are involved in a task (Passer & Smith, 2021). In other words, some individuals work better independently and teams are not suited to all organisational tasks (Coutu, 2013). Groups can also limit creativity and create conformity (Janis, 1983; Passer & Smith, 2021).

Freedman and Somech (2021) have noted conceptual irregularities in the research on school teams, arguing that many studies need to define the concept of teams or teamwork more clearly. In the 1990s, Hall and Wallace (1996; 1994a) complained that the approach to teams in schools was based too heavily on the work of management scholars. They described these studies as prescriptive, utopian, and "unattainable within the messy reality of every life in schools" (p. 297). However, the approach to teams in schools has not matured significantly since the 1990s. Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2007) noted that there is a "shortage of appropriate teamwork models designed specifically for the education system" (p. 306). They argued that "most attempts to introduce teamwork in schools have been based on models developed for corporate organisations, which do not take the unique characteristics of school systems into account" (p. 306). One of the aims of this thesis is to address Somech and Drach-Zahavy's (2007) concerns. First, the researcher will describe, empirically, the characteristics that enhance and inhibit SLTs. Second, the researcher will create a high-performing senior leadership team framework that is relevant to schools.

2.5.2 The Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

The focus of this study is on the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) include the executive members of the school who help the principal to lead the school. Some schools and some scholars use different terms to

describe the SLT. For example, the SLT has been referred to as the Executive, The Executive Leadership Team (Barnett & McCormick, 2012), College Executive, the Principal's Leadership Team (Macklin & Zbar, 2020) and the Senior Management Team (Cranston & Ehrich, 2005; Ridden, 1992). The term SLT is used throughout this thesis because it is the most consistently used term in contemporary scholarly literature and within the context of CEWA.

SLTs vary in size. In the context of CEWA, SLTs can include four to ten members. The typical structure of a CEWA SLT includes a Principal (team leader), Head of Teaching and Learning, Head of Pastoral Care, Head of Catholic Mission and a Business Manager. In addition, some schools with large student populations will include roles such as the Head of Community Development, Head of Primary (in a composite school), and Head of Boarding. These additional roles represent areas of strategic importance. The main function of the SLT is to support principal to lead the strategic areas of the school (Benoliel, 2021; Benoliel & Berkovich, 2017; Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Wallace, 2002). These strategic areas usually include the school's vision, values, operations, teaching and learning program, pastoral care, staff development, marketing and communications, community engagement, governance and finance (Benoliel, 2021; Benoliel & Berkovich, 2017; Wallace, 2002). In the context of CEWA, the SLT support the principal to lead the school's vision. The main pillars of this vision include Catholic Identity, Education, Community and Stewardship (Catholic Education Western Australia, 2021d). SLT members usually take responsibility for specific leadership portfolios that include faith formation, curriculum, teacher development, pastoral care, student well-being, student enrolments, parent engagement, financial management, capital development, and marketing and communications (Catholic Education Western Australia, 2021d).

The SLT is essential to busy principals (Cranston & Ehrich, 2004; Hutton, 2022; Ridden, 1992; See et al., 2022). Ridden and De Nobile (2012) commented that "A principal alone is a limited resource trying to meet unlimited needs" (p. 59). Likewise, Hutton (2022) observed that "schools today are just too complex, pedagogically, socially, culturally, spiritually, and financially, for a single leader to operate from a hierarchical position" (para 2). In addition to supporting the principal, some scholars have recognised that the SLT provides its members with a valuable source of support, morale, stress reduction and professional learning (Bell, 1992, 2002; Cranston & Ehrich, 2009b; Ridden & De Nobile, 2012; Wallace & Hall,

1994a). Leithwood (2020) has shown that leadership is second to classroom teaching in its effect on student achievement. As such, the SLT could be considered the most influential team in the school as it contains the most significant number of senior leaders.

2.5.3 The Emergence of SLTs in Australian Schools

Although it may appear that SLTs have always been in a presence in schools, this is not the case. Several educational scholars have traced the emergence of SLTs to the early 1990s and the educational reforms associated with decentralisation and school-based management, which increased the principal's workload (Cranston & Ehrich, 2004; Cranston & Ehrich, 2005; Gronn, 2000, 2003; Ridden, 1992; Walker, 1994). Decentralisation and school-based management refer to shifting responsibility for running schools from a central government or system to individual schools and their principals. In the context of Western Australia, the school decentralisation reforms were outlined in the Western Australian Ministry of Education's policy, *Better Schools in Western Australia: A Program for Improvement* (Harvey, 1987; Ministry of Education, 1987). This policy sought to increase the principal's responsibility for school tasks, including creating school development plans, managing staff and consulting with the community (Harvey, 1987). Eventually, principals would be asked to take on school finances, teacher development, instructional improvement, technology integration and community engagement (Caldwell, 1993; Caldwell & Spinks, 1992). Advocates for decentralisation included policymakers and academics. They contended that principals knew their schools better than bureaucrats and would be more able to manage the problems with more responsibility for their schools (Dimmock, 1993; Harvey, 1987). Governments favoured decentralisation because it allowed them to set an educational vision and monitor its implementation by school principals (Dimmock, 1993).

Decentralisation and school-based management had a significant impact on the principal's role. Ridden (1992), a Western Australian writer and senior school leader, provided an eyewitness account of the impact of decentralisation:

Gone are the days when principals were considered successful if children's work standards in the basic subjects were high, and the school ran efficiently. Now they are expected to involve the entire school community in making decisions about the school's goals and the use and development of its

resources; to facilitate the process of change to achieve those goals; to support teachers and others involved in the school for their individual and corporate wellbeing, and to provide leadership that allows everyone to feel satisfied with the outcomes.

The policies of decentralisation and school-based management invited principals to rethink their leadership roles. Walker (1994) commented that: “leadership in the context of the 1990s has moved from its traditional concentration on maintenance to a key role in change, teamwork and improvement” (p. 39). Caldwell and Spinks (1992) noted that their autocratic leadership did not work in self-managed schools. They argued that principals needed to distribute their leadership across the school, empowering others. Walker (1994) recognised that principals needed to shift their leadership style to be more collaborative than controlling. Decentralisation and school-based management invited principals to share or distribute their leadership with others, especially the SLT.

At the beginning of the 1990s, many educational scholars thought positively about teamwork in schools and the benefits of distributing leadership across an SLT (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992; Walker, 1994). For example, Ridden (1992) argued that "the increasing complexity of school management requires knowledge, skills, experience, perceptions of time – well beyond the capabilities of any one person" (p. 10). He believed that "principals who make all the decisions themselves, do everything themselves, or tell everyone else what they will do, find that either school suffers or they do" (p. 10). Ridden felt a more distributed approach to executive school leadership was beneficial to both the principal and the school.

The formation of SLTs, as a response to decentralisation, school-based management and as an expression of the desire to share leadership with other staff, was not just particular to Australia. Scholars have shown that a similar phenomenon occurred in the United Kingdom in the early 1990s and in New Zealand and the United States of America (Cardno, 2002; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Wallace & Hall, 1994b; Wynn & Guditus, 1984). The overall pattern suggests that when governments devolve responsibility for education to principals, principals respond by building an SLT to deal with their additional responsibilities. It may be the case, too, that as SLTs experience an overwhelming workload (See et al., 2022), they may also

devolve leadership responsibility to other staff that report to them such as middle leaders (Grootenboer et al., 2020).

2.5.4 SLTs in Catholic Education Western Australian Schools

Although SLTs are commonplace in CEWA secondary and composite schools today, their emergence in CEWA schools is not well documented. It seems likely that, as was the case in non-Catholic schools, SLTs emerged in CEWA schools as a response to a range of forces that increased the principal's accountability and workload in the 1990s. For example, some Catholic commentators have noted that decentralisation significantly impacted Catholic schools. Thomas (1997) recalled: "government has become a significant factor in non-government schooling. Its provision of funds alone requires paperwork, financial and educational accountability and supplementary enquiries and questionnaires" (p. 101). In addition, some scholars have noted that during the 1990s, Catholic principals had been experiencing the additional challenge of taking on more responsibility for leading the religious dimension of education as the participation of religious brothers and sisters in school leadership had steadily decreased in Australian Catholic schools since the 1970s (Pendal, 2008; Thomas, 1997).

There is some evidence that CEWA principals of the 1990s were encouraged to take a more team-oriented approach to leadership. For example, a key guiding document for CEWA principals in the 1990s, *The Mandate Letter* (1993), outlined that

The principal has ultimate responsibility, under the diocesan bishop, for every aspect of the Catholic school's life and curriculum. He or she has the right and responsibility to give leadership to the school community, especially to its efforts to achieve its purposes and aims, its development as a faith community, its religious dimension and goals of its Religious Education program. All other leadership roles within the Catholic school are delegated by the principal (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, para 46).

This passage from *The Mandate Letter* highlights CEWA principals' extraordinary responsibility and accountability for the entire school. It also encourages principals to share their leadership with other school leaders. As the

workload for principals increased in the 1990s, it seems likely that CEWA principals saw value in sharing their leadership with other senior leaders. These leaders are likely to have formed the first SLTs.

2.5.5 Australian Scholarship on SLTs in the 21st Century

The first commentaries on the role of SLTs in Australian schools surfaced in the early 1990s (Ridden, 1992; Walker, 1993). However, it was not until the early 2000s that a small but consistent literature on Australian SLTs emerged (Barnett & McCormick, 2012; Cranston & Ehrich, 2004; Cranston & Ehrich, 2005, 2009b; Zappulla, 2003). The research included scholarly case study reports about SLTs in refereed journals (Cranston & Ehrich, 2005; Barnett et al., 2003), feature articles (Cole, 2006), doctoral studies (Egberts, 2010), personal accounts (Ryan, 2015) and school improvement guidance (Macklin & Zbar, 2020). These authors recognised that SLTs were an exciting form of distributed leadership and an essential function in schools. SLTs held much promise but needed development.

In the mid-2000s, Cranston and Ehrich (2005, 2009) conducted case study research on SLTs. Their secondary school case studies focused on dynamic power interactions between SLT members and processes that could enhance SLTs. Cranston and Ehrich (2005) recognised that SLTs were not a utopian leadership construct. They found that SLTs could be dysfunctional, rife with “internal conflict”, “manipulation”, and “defensive behaviour and power struggles” (p. 81). Cranston and Ehrich (2005) argued that developing an effective SLT was hard work but could be a positive form of leadership if principals and SLT members were committed to teamwork and team development. Cranston and Ehrich (2005) developed a team effectiveness questionnaire and professional learning process to help SLTs improve.

During the 2000s, there were few studies on SLTs in the Australian Catholic context. Zappulla (2003) explored issues in developing three SLTs in three Victorian Catholic primary schools. For Zappulla, the SLT was an augmentation of the principal's leadership, assisting the principal in promoting the school's vision, implementing the school's strategic plan, managing change, and implementing shared decision-making. Zappulla found that all team members benefited from this new leadership structure but in different ways. The principal had a more transparent overview of the whole school. SLT members learned new skills and felt part of a team. Zappulla noted that while SLTs were becoming a standard structure in

Victorian Catholic schools, some SLT members were unsure how to work together as a team. An outcome of Zappulla's study was the creation of a framework and programme for the development of SLTs. However, this framework and the supporting strategy appear to have been discontinued in Victorian Catholic schools. Like Zappulla, Egberts (2010) used his doctoral studies to explore the mission of two SLTs in two Victorian Catholic schools. He found that effective SLTs were more than the sum of their parts and that the principal played a crucial role in influencing the SLT, setting its direction and preventing the team from getting 'bogged' down by operational issues.

In their study of SLTs, Barnett and McCormick (2012) found that principals "played a critical role, fulfilling the role of team leader, and applying leadership functions flexibly to enable team development, [and] management effectiveness" (p. 653). Barnett and McCormick (2012) argued that principals who used a coaching approach in their leadership style were more effective in developing the SLT. Recently Corrigan and Merry (2022) have found that many stakeholders value principals that employ a coaching approach to leadership. Similarly, Collie (2021) found that Australian principals who adopted an "autonomy supportive leadership" style during the COVID-19- pandemic appeared more likely to empower teachers and reduce teacher stress and emotional exhaustion (p. 1)

Several Australian scholars have commented on the benefits of SLTs. Cole (2006) wrote that "the development of an effective Leadership Team is of critical importance to a school" (p. 11). Ridden and De Nobile (2012) stressed the importance of "individuals, teams and partnerships" in school leadership (p. 65). They argued that "principals of effective schools make use of the experience, skills, knowledge and energies of all staff, and involve executive staff in a shared leadership role" (p. 65). Macklin and Zbar (2020) saw teams as a precondition for school improvement and developed a process for enhancing the SLT, which involved a team audit and development plan.

The small body of Australian literature on SLTs discussed above has not strongly influenced the national approach to school leadership or the approach of CEWA system leaders. For example, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) have developed resources about principals and teachers but not teams (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2011). A recent seminal government report on school improvement (Gonski et al., 2018)

included a discussion on empowering and supporting school leaders but few comments about SLTs or teams in schools. The emphasis of academic scholarship about leadership in CEWA has focused on principals (Glasson, 2014; Gurr et al., 2005; Heffernan, 2018; Lavery & Hine, 2013; O'Neill & Glasson, 2019; Sayce, 2014). The approach of CEWA to leadership development has also tended to emphasise individuals rather than teams. Historically, CEWA's Leadership Frameworks (2008, 2021) have emphasised individual leadership roles such as emerging, middle and senior leaders. Moreover, it is individuals, not teams, that are developed through leadership programs (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009, 2019; Catholic Education Western Australia, 2021a, 2021b). An exception to the individualistic focus is CEWA's Quality Catholic School Review. In this process, SLTs are acknowledged as school leaders and consulted about the school's improvement journey (Catholic Education Western Australia, 2022).

Macklin and Zbar (2020) have highlighted that an individual focus on leadership "is not sufficient on its own" and that school improvement depends on the principal's capacity to build "a strong and united leadership team that speaks with one voice" (p. 39). Long ago, Walker (1994) argued that systems that focus on individuals discourage teamwork. If teams are valued in schools, "schools should conduct performance appraisals targeting the team as a unit rather than concentrating on individuals" (Walker, 1995, p. 42).

It is surprising that both AITSL and CEWA continue to focus on individual leadership development when leadership scholars, for several decades, have been suggesting that teams and collaboration play a significant role in leadership. Back in 1997, Rost suggested that "The age of the individual is gone...Leadership is not what one individual... leader does. Leadership is what leaders and collaborators do together" (p. 15). Similarly, Gronn (2000) has consistently argued that "the idea of anyone being the source for all...influence is just plain wrong...leadership is shared, and emergent" (p. 5). Cranston and Ehrich (2009) reflected: "there is now strong evidence that an approach of working with and through others is much more likely to characterise principals' work than early individualistic 'great man' approaches" (p. 15). Finally, a significant study by Leithwood (2020) noted that "school leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed" (p. 12).

Many scholars have recognised that school leadership has become too complex to handle independently and that SLTs provide the appropriate capacity and

capability to deal with contemporary challenges in schools (DeWitt, 2021; Ridden, 1992; Ridden & De Nobile, 2012). The response of principals to COVID-19 in Western Australia is a recent example of the capacity of SLTs. During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, many principals were forced to become contact tracers and, in many respects, handed over the school's leadership to members of their SLT (Hiatt, 2022). With the predicted teacher shortage emerging as a significant leadership issue for Australian schools in 2023 and beyond, principals are likely to turn their attention to human resource management, leaning on their SLT to lead in other areas of school life.

The more individualistic approach of Australian institutions focused on school leadership has been different to the United Kingdom's National College for School Leadership's approach. From 2009-2018, the National College of School Leadership (NCSL) provided research and resources on the SLTs in school leadership (Bush et al., 2012; Bush & Glover, 2012; Thomas, 2009). A significant scholarly consensus of the NCSL was that effective principals were using a team approach to leadership. A study (Thomas, 2009) sponsored by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) included the following recommendation:

The building and development of leadership teams becomes a core part of appropriate NCSL programmes...inspection frameworks focus more on team leadership and less on the individual head or principal. The National Standards for School Leadership include an emphasis on the development of strong and effective leadership teams. (p. 23)

Australian educational scholars could benefit from the insights of the NCSL. However, to the researcher's knowledge, there have been no significant published scholarly studies of SLTs in Australia since the work of Barnett and McCormick (2012). Moreover, there are limited practical resources to support principals in growing and developing their SLTs. An exception is Macklin and Zbar (2020), who provided a team audit questionnaire that principals could use to develop their SLT. If SLTs are an essential leadership function in schools, then it would seem sensible to find out what makes them effective (Cranston & Ehrich, 2009). Such knowledge will likely be useful to principals, the SLT, and the stakeholders that support SLTs.

Although some international scholars still research SLTs (Benoliel, 2021; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; DeWitt, 2021; Somech & Freedman, 2021), the scholarship

is limited. Benoliel and Berkovich (2017) have focused on the role of teams in driving school improvement. Somech and Freedman (2021) provided a much-needed literature review of the scholarly work on teams in education. Recently De Witt (2021) has written a guide to school improvement which emphasised the SLT's role in leading learning. In the British context, there have been few studies of SLTs since the closing of the National College for School Leadership in 2018.

2.6 Summary

This section focused on the emergence of SLTs in Australian schools. It was suggested that SLTs formed due to the decentralisation of schools in the early 1990s and, as a corollary, an increase in the principal's workload. It was shown that the education profession embraced the idea of shared leadership as a mechanism for sharing expertise and improving education. This section highlighted a small body of literature that emerged on SLTs between 1993-2012 in the Australian scholarly context, although this has largely disappeared. Finally, this section identified that institutions such as CEWA and AITSL appear to have overlooked the role SLTs play, focusing more on individual leadership roles. The purpose of this section was to explain how educators have approached the use of teams in schools, especially the SLT. The next section explores the school-based research on the characteristics that enhance SLTs.

2.7 Characteristics that Enhance SLT effectiveness in Schools

It is common for SLT scholars to provide a list of the characteristics of an effective SLT. For example, Wallace and Hall (1994) listed 43 hypotheses about effective SLTs. Cranston and Ehrich (2009) described ten factors. Thomas (2009) listed six conditions. Bush et al. (2012) outlined five characteristics. These lists share many similarities but do not always use the same language. For example, what Ridden and De Nobile (2012) call "growth" (p. 64), Thomas (2009) described as "team development" (p. 13), and Macklin and Zbar (2020) called "monitoring performance" (p. 50). Sometimes the effective team list are borrowed from other fields. Thomas (2009), for example, acknowledges that his six conditions of an effective SLT echo those of Wageman (2009), an academic in psychology. To avoid favouring one list of SLT characteristics over another, in this section of the literature review, the characteristics that enhance SLT effectiveness in schools have been

synthesised into a list of ten common characteristics, summarised in Figure 2.2. The ten characteristics of an effective SLT are: effective team design, the principal’s effective leadership, a shared positive culture, shared vision, clear operating norms, professional competence, skilful communication, professional development, time together and performance evaluation (Bell, 1992; Bush et al., 2012; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Cranston & Ehrich, 2004; 2005; Ridden, 1992; Thomas, 2009; Wallace & Hall, 1994a).

Figure 2.2

The Ten Characteristics of Effective SLTs Established in the Literature Review

1	Effective team design
2	The principal's effective leadership
3	A shared positive culture
4	Shared vision
5	Clear operating norms
6	Professional competence
7	Skilful communication
8	Professional development
9	Time together
10	Performance evaluation

2.7.1 Effective Team Design

Many scholars agree that an effective SLT should be designed to achieve the school’s vision (Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Thomas, 2009; Wallace & Hall, 1994b). The selection of the SLT is usually determined by the principal (Hall & Wallace, 1996). Thomas (2009) has observed that SLTs should be as small as possible and include the right people, with the right skills, in the right roles. He argued that smaller SLTs are more effective than larger teams because they maximise efficiency and limit the potential for harmful group dynamics. As mentioned previously, the SLT usually has between four and ten members. Each member is assigned to an element of the school’s vision, such as teaching and learning, pastoral care, business management, campus logistics, staff development and marketing and communications.

Several scholars argued that because schools are complex, teams should be diverse in roles and cognitive styles (Cranston & Ehrich, 2009; Stott & Walker, 1999). Freedman and Somech (2021) found that team composition significantly

impacted team effectiveness and that teams with diverse memberships were more effective. Team diversity increased the “organisational capacity to process complex information, a task too demanding for the individual leader” (Stott & Walker, 1999). Bush et al. (2012) found that well-designed SLTs distributed leadership amongst team members but retained a strong focus on teaching and pastoral issues. Although the SLT requires diversity to be effective, the team also requires SLT members to focus on a shared vision. Ridden (1992) saw “diversity” in staff skills as a strength but considered “diversity in purpose” a weakness (p. 40).

2.7.2 The Principal’s Effective Leadership

The principal plays a crucial role in an effective SLT (Avenell, 2011b; Bush et al., 2012; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Hall & Wallace, 1996; Wallace & Hall, 1994a, 1994b). Wallace and Hall (1994b) singled out the principal's leadership as "the single most critical factor affecting the potential for [team] synergy" (p. 10). Cranston and Ehrich (2009) argued that the principal “sets the parameters and culture or tone for the type, extent and quality of teamwork that is enacted” (p. 18). Thomas (2009) found, "There was no question in any of the teams that the head exercised ultimate authority” (p. 19). Bush et al. (2012) argued that strong principals were crucial for SLTs. Tetzlaff (2017) found that “Leaders are essential in a permanent team to ensure that the team establishes structures and processes to guide their operation...[they] create the conditions for effective team operation” (p. 66). Shore and Walshaw (2018) discovered that “effective principals create the conditions in the team that allows free debate, disagreement, laughter and fun” (p. 316). Several scholars have suggested that principals were most effective when they nurtured and coached their teams to develop as leaders and achieve the team's goals (Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Cranston & Ehrich, 2005; Hackman, 2002; Hall & Wallace, 1996; Northouse, 2019).

2.7.3 A Shared Positive Culture

Several scholars commented that effective SLTs had a shared, positive culture. SLT members displayed shared beliefs, values and ways of interacting. For example, effective SLT team members believed teamwork was important (Wallace & Hall, 1994; Cranston & Ehrich, 2005, 2009). Shore and Walshaw (2018) found that “team members must totally buy into collective responsibility” (p. 316). Ridden

(1992) argued that in an effective SLT, “team members value the team, are loyal and committed to it” (46). Thomas (2009) contended that team members' loyalty was critical to the SLT's success (p. 18). Bush et al. (2012) maintained that an effective SLT is held together by a commitment to unity even where there is tension.

Most scholars agreed that effective SLTs had built cultures where team members felt a strong sense of trust, warmth and loyalty (Bush et al., 2012; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Thomas, 2009). Effective team members listened, sought consensus and advocated for each other (Bush et al., 2012; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Thomas, 2009). For Zappulla (2003), effective teams were the result of healthy relationships: "The ability to be honest, open and to share expertise within the team was rated high by the participants" (p. 33). Ridden described an effective SLT as a place where “team members feel valued and gather strength from one another” (Ridden, 1992, p. 41). Bush et al. (2012) noted that high-performing SLTs included strong personal relationships and warm and positive cultures. Earley and Weindling (2004) found that mutual trust, support, and a sense of unity were key characteristics of effective SLTs.

2.7.4 Shared Vision

Several scholars indicated that shared vision was a characteristic of an effective SLT (Avenell, 2011a, 2011b; Bush et al., 2012; Cranston & Ehrich, 2005, 2009b; Thomas, 2009). Cranston and Ehrich (2009) found that effective teams have “a common purpose and clear vision, with clear roles, commitment and communication” (p. 18). Ridden (1992) argued that effective SLTs “share a common purpose: the team understands and supports the team purpose and know what they, as a group, believe and accept” (p. 40). This purpose should include an image of what the school looks like at its best and a clear statement about what each SLT member is doing to make that vision a reality (Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Zappulla, 2003). Macklin and Zbar (2020) reflected that effective teams clearly understand where the team is heading and support the team's goals. Freedman and Somech (2021) found that shared tasks and a shared vision were critical to team effectiveness.

2.7.5 Clear Operating Norms

Several scholars suggested effective SLTs had clear operating norms (Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Thomas, 2009). Boudett and Lockwood (2019) described

team norms as "shared agreements about how a group will work together" (p. 12). They argued that "norms can play a powerful role in eliciting the breadth of perspective that is needed for a group of educators to tackle hard problems" (p. 12). Clear operating norms may include regular meeting times and clear decision-making protocols. Somech and Drach-Zahavy (2007) and Freedman and Somech (2021) noted that meetings frequently enhanced team efficacy. Clear operating norms could also extend to behavioural expectations. Cranston and Ehrich (2009) commented that "members need to hold clear expectations, resolving disagreements openly by discussion and being committed to the readiness for change as necessary" (p. 18). For Wallace and Hall (1997), effective SLTs built team cultures where effective listening and candour were norms.

2.7.6 Skilful Communication

Many scholars agreed that effective communication was essential to SLTs. Effective communication must occur within and beyond the team with key stakeholders in the school (Wallace & Hall, 1994a). Ridden (1992) has noted that all members of the SLT must "know school direction and priorities, resources and budgets, staff changes, tensions and conflicts, and current issues and activities" (p. 41). Effective SLT members should communicate candidly and disagree skilfully (Bush et al., 2012; Thomas, 2009; Wallace & Hall, 1994a). The most effective teams disagreed for positive reasons; they wanted the best for the team (Macklin & Zbar, 2017). The principal was frequently seen as the conduit of skilled conflict resolution and an arbiter of peace (Barnett & McCormick, 2012; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017). The principal was frequently seen as the conduit of skilled conflict resolution and an arbiter of peace (Barnett & McCormick, 2012; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017).

An additional element of effective communication was the ability to communicate beyond the SLT. Bush et al. (2012) contended that the SLT was likely more effective when it connected with stakeholders throughout the school. Ridden (1992) argued that SLT members needed to get out amongst the staff. For Ridden, effective SLTs "ensure that staff develop a team outlook by encouraging and facilitating interaction across boundaries within the school, such as different departments, year levels, or buildings" (p. 51).

2.7.7 Professional Competence

Several scholars found that effective SLTs were often comprised of experienced, competent senior leaders with a track record of professional success as teachers (Bush et al., 2012; Thomas, 2009). Goodall identified “longevity of service” and “experience” as factors in high-performing SLTs (Goodall, 2013, p. 206). Bush et al. (2012) showed that effective SLT members had a history of effective teaching practice. In addition, SLT members worked well in teams and valued teamwork. Team members also brought their unique skillsets and experience to the SLT. Ridden (1992) saw differences between SLT members as a strength. He wrote: “An effective team knows and uses the strengths of the members...Each member of the team is valued for their particular abilities, which they use for a common purpose” (p. 42). Bush et al. (2012) believed that membership of the SLT was a privilege and members of high-performing SLTs should share the school's vision, show commitment to the school, establish a track record of effective teaching, show care for children and provide evidence of continuous service to the school.

2.7.8 Professional Development

Various scholars have argued that effective SLTs require training and development to improve (Cranston & Ehrich, 2009b; Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Thomas, 2009). SLTs need to learn how to work together as a team, but SLT members can be uncertain about their “role, procedures, preparation or training as a leadership team” (Zappulla, 2002, p. 33). Goodall (2013) commented: “training tends to have a positive effect on performance, both directly (in the form of new skills) and indirectly in the form of outcomes such as empowerment, communication and planning” (p. 201). Thomas (2009), Bush et al. (2012), and Cardno and Tetzlaff (2017) shared the view that the professional development of the SLT was a driver of its efficacy. Walker (1994) wrote that “ongoing professional development for teams, as well as individuals, is paramount for successful team growth and must be recognised, rewarded and supported throughout the school” (p. 42). SLTs needed to be taught how to work together, develop their skills, and review their collective performance. Zappulla (2003) argued that it was the principal's role to develop the team. Cranston and Ehrich (2004) noted that effective SLTs ensure team members have opportunities to learn through induction processes, team development exercises, and reflection on practice. Bush et al. (2012) found that the team's professional

development should focus on four things: promoting the team's shared goals, understanding the skillsets of each SLT member, ensuring the team knows how to complete tasks and facilitating effective interactions that enhance decision-making. To improve team performance, Ridden (1992) recommended SLTs participate in professional development together, engage in new experiences, receive feedback from people within and without the team and receive coaching.

2.7.9 Time Together

Some SLT scholars noted that effective SLTs take time to perform effectively. Several researchers found that team continuity and length of service at the school strongly predicted SLT team success (Bush et al., 2012; Thomas, 2009) Ridden (1992) argued that effective SLTs prioritise time together. Cardno and Tetzlaff (2017) found that most SLTs would benefit from understanding the team maturation process. They emphasised the need to understand Tuckman's group formation model. Tuckman (1965) argued that teams mature through four phases of development, previously discussed: forming, storming, norming and performing. The notion that effective SLTs take time to perform well echoes Hackman's (2002) seminal results that teams take time to integrate.

2.7.10 Performance Evaluation

The research indicated regular self-evaluation of the SLT was important to its efficacy (Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Thomas, 2009; Walker, 1994). Cranston and Ehrlich (2009) and Thomas (2009) stressed the need for SLTs to assess their performance continuously. Ridden (1992) argued that "teams need to grow. This requires conscious effort to improve the individual and team competencies" (p. 49). To be effective, SLTs need to know how they have performed. To understand how they have performed, teams need to specify what performance measures matter to them. Donohoo and Katz (2019) argued that school teams need to practise new skills and have a clear plan to monitor their performance of those skills. Many commentators noted the principal's role in driving team self-evaluation. For example, Thomas (2009) found that the principal used a coaching approach to enable "the team to review its performance and operation" (p. 21).

2.8 Summary

This section of the literature review identified ten characteristics of an effective SLT. They were: effective team design, the principal's effective leadership, a shared positive culture, shared vision, clear operating norms, professional competence, skilful communication, professional development, time together and performance evaluation. This section of the review helped address research sub-question one: What characteristics do principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive as supporting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS? This section of the literature review also addressed research sub-question three: What resources or professional learning do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs? This section indicated that SLTs must be inducted, developed and reviewed. The following section will explore research question two: What characteristics do principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing CCSS?

2.9 Characteristics that Inhibit SLT Effectiveness in Schools

The work of scholars on SLTs tends to emphasise the positive aspects of working in teams more than the negative aspects. One consequence of such an approach, as Sinclair (1995) observed long ago, is that researchers can ignore the qualities that hinder the effectiveness of teams. Although there are many ways to impact an SLT negatively, the most commonly cited inhibitors of SLTs in the literature include interpersonal strain, individualism, contrived collegiality, time-wasting and excessive workload (Bell, 1992, 2002; Bush et al., 2012; Ridden, 1992; Ridden & De Nobile, 2012; Thomas, 2009). While no established hierarchy is emphasised in the literature, research from within and beyond the educational literature suggests interpersonal strain is one of the most inhibiting factors of team effectiveness (Bush et al., 2012; Coyle, 2018; Felps et al., 2006).

2.9.1 Interpersonal Strain

Interpersonal strain refers to the many ways SLT members can engage in behaviours that impede other members of the SLT. Examples of interpersonal strain include "personality clashes, defensiveness, headteacher domination, incompetence, burnout, [and] weak leadership" (Wallace & Hall, 1994, p. 12). Wallace and Hall

(1994a) found that SLTs were especially vulnerable to dysfunction when the principal engaged in disruptive behaviours such as dominating the SLT. Cranston and Erich (2009) noted that disagreements over goals, “intragroup competition, domination by one or more players, and personal attacks” inhibited SLTs (p. 19). One recent scholar found that a “rogue member of the team” was “cancerous” to team effectiveness (Shore & Walshaw, 2018, p. 316).

2.9.2 Individualism

Individualistic team members can inhibit SLTs. Wallace and Hall (1996) found: “reluctant team members can undermine teamwork by refusing to play the team game or playing manipulative games that are in conflict with collaborative workstyles” (p. 301). Walker (1994) wrote: “if teamwork is to have a realistic chance of working in schools, the culture needs to emphasize cooperation rather than competition through the school and among teams (p. 40). Competition for attention in the team can be disruptive to the effective function of the SLT. When school leaders and school systems evaluating the performance of individuals only, it encourages a culture of individualism rather than cooperation (Walker, 1994). Building on the work of Wageman et al. (2008), Avenell (2011b) argued that the SLT might be particularly vulnerable to dysfunction because, unlike teacher teams, the SLT comprises senior leaders who are used to leading their own teams and not necessarily acting as followers. Avenell (2011b) described some of the ironic weaknesses of school leadership teams. He argued that SLTs are made up of senior people but were often “under-designed, under-led and under-resourced” (p. 39). Avenell (2011a) also recognised that SLT members also acted politically to protect their job opportunities.

2.9.3 Contrived Collegiality

Several researchers argued that SLTs were ineffective when they pretended to value collegiality (Avenell, 2011a; Stott & Walker, 1999). Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) termed this behaviour “contrived collegiality” (p. 21). They argued that contrived collegiality could limit free thinking through efforts towards group conformity. Walker (1994) noted that some principals espoused valuing teamwork but acted individualistically. Similarly, Avenell (2011a) indicated that SLT members could suppress strong emotions to maintain superficial harmony. Contrived

collegiality is a problem for SLTs, because, like groupthink (Janis, 1991), contrived collegiality prevents the SLT from dealing with issues that might make the team more effective. “Groups”, argued Fullan and Hargreaves (1991), “are more vulnerable to faddism than are individuals” (p. 21). As discussed, a team with strong psychological safety can address complex issues that hinder team performance (Clark, 2020; Coyle, 2009; Edmondson, 2018). However, when teams display contrived collegiality, their performance is inhibited because they are unable to raise objections to issues faced by the team (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991).

2.9.4 *Ineffective Use of Time*

The ineffective use of time can take many forms and inhibit SLT effectiveness. For example, Wallace and Hall (1994a) found that time-wasting inhibited the SLT's effectiveness. SLT members could waste time in meetings, informal communications, or failed decision-making (Wallace and Hall, 1994a). Ridden (1992) and Zappulla (2003) noted that a lack of time on task prevented teams from functioning at their best. Avenell (2011b) described SLTs as busy and overloaded yet ineffective in meetings.

2.10 Summary

This section explored the characteristics that inhibited SLTs. There are many ways to inhibit an SLT. However, four characteristics stood out: interpersonal strain, individualism, contrived collegiality and time-wasting. This section addressed research sub-question two: What characteristics do principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing CCSS? The next section will explore models of leadership that inform the principal's role.

2.11 Models of Leadership that Inform the Principal's Role

The concept of leadership has been discussed in myth, history and politics for thousands of years (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Burns, 1978); however, there is no universal definition of an effective leader (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Burns, 1978; Marzano et al., 2005). That said, many contemporary leadership scholars agree that leadership is a process of influence focused on shared goal achievement (Northouse, 2019). In the context of education, Macklin and Zbar (2020) define an effective leader as a someone who makes the right things happen consistently. Most

educational leadership scholars agree that the right things include improving teaching, learning, and student achievement (Bush et al., 2019; Marzano et al., 2005; Northouse & Lee, 2019; Timperley & Robertson, 2012). Educational leadership scholars with a faith tradition argue that effective leaders also develop the spiritual growth of students and their communities (Dosen & Rieckhoff, 2016; Hammad & Shah, 2018; Keane & Riley, 1997).

Earlier in this literature review, the principal's leadership was identified as an essential characteristic of an effective SLT. To understand the principal's leadership of the SLT in more depth, the following section examines five different models of leadership that inform the principal's leadership of the SLT within the context of Catholic Education Western Australia composite and secondary schools. The five leadership models include transactional, transformational, instructional, Christ-centred-servant leadership and distributed leadership. The researcher has chosen these five models of leadership for two reasons. One, they are frequently cited in the discourse on educational leadership (Bush et al., 2019; Marzano et al., 2005). Two, they are well known and well discussed in the context of Catholic education (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009; Catholic Education Western Australia, 2021b; Gallin, 2022; Lavery, 2011, 2012; Outtrim, 2022).

2.11.1 Transactional Leadership

Burns (1978) coined the term transactional leadership to describe the most common form of leadership he observed in political life. Burns felt that most leader-follower relationships were transactional. He believed that "leaders approach followers intending to exchange one thing for another" (p. 4). Typically, the leader has a goal in mind and exchanges a reward for compliance with that goal. If followers meet the leader's expectations, they are rewarded financially or emotionally. Conversely, followers are corrected, sometimes punished, if they do not meet the leader's expectations (Chapman et al., 2014; Northouse, 2019).

The concept of transactional leadership has been popular in educational literature. Marzano (2005) described three styles of transactional leadership. The first style is management-by-exception-passive. In this style, the leader sets the standard of work and then steps in if followers fail to meet the standard. The objective is to "maintain the status quo" (p. 14). The second style of transactional leadership is management-by-exception-active. Using this style, the leader sets the standard of

work and actively monitors task completion. This style of leadership could be described as micro-management. The last kind of transactional leadership is constructive transactional. In this style, leaders set clear goals, expectations and rewards. The leader recognises employees' work and provides feedback. Marzano (2005) contends that the constructive transactional leadership style is considered the “most effective” mode of transactional leadership (p. 14).

Transactional leadership has positive and negative aspects for schools. For example, Lavery (2011) noted that “clear managerial structures” and clear communication help schools run effectively (p. 30). However, a negative aspect of transactional leadership is that it may not bring out the best in followers. Chapman et al. (2014) observed some of the downsides of a transactional approach to leadership:

The current leadership models require organizations to motivate their people largely with fear and extrinsic rewards. Though no one argues that these forms of motivation can produce short-term results, they are usually accompanied by distrust and cynicism in the workplace which have long-term negative consequences... These models are simply not sustainable if the goal is to build vibrant, creative and profitable organisations with engaged, productive teams (p. ii).

Transactional leadership styles struggle in constantly changing environments (Chapman, 2014). For example, it is difficult for a transactional leader to keep making transactions in a domain – like schools – that requires adaptivity. In such situations, a model of leadership that inspires others to deal with change and inspires people to meet the challenges of their context is needed. That model of leadership is called transformational leadership.

2.11.2 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is associated with motivation and inspiration (Burns, 1978; Northouse, 2019). A transformational leader inspires followers to reach their potential (Burns, 1978). Dosen and Rieckhoff (2016) wrote that: “at the heart of transformational leadership is the joining together of each person's interest into a common interest” (p. 11). Scholars have identified four aspects of transformational leadership (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Marzano et al., 2005; Sinclair, 1995) The first aspect is idealised influence. In this style, leaders demonstrate strong

beliefs, confidence and faith in others. The second style is inspirational motivation. Leaders communicate high expectations to followers and motivate them to achieve their potential. The third aspect of transformational leadership is intellectual stimulation. Leaders enable followers to think about new problems in different ways. The last style is individualised consideration. Leaders make time to talk with individuals who might be neglected and include them in the leadership vision.

Lavery (2011) argued that the “notion of transformational leadership, especially with its emphasis on charisma, inspiration, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation, has frequently been proposed as an appropriate form of leadership for school principals” (p. 29). A strength of the transformational approach is the ability of the leader to engage and inspire others to bring more of themselves to a task (Burns, 1978; Dosen & Rieckhoff, 2016). Collie (2021) found that Australian principals who adopted a transformational or "autonomy supportive leadership" style during the COVID-19- pandemic appeared more likely to empower teachers and reduce teacher stress and emotional exhaustion (p. 1) However, a drawback of transformational leadership is that inspiring words may be empty if not followed with detailed actions specific to the challenges of the teaching and learning context (Hattie, 2015).

2.11.3 Instructional Leadership

Hattie (2015a) and Robinson (2019) have been critical of transformational leadership, arguing that it focuses too much on inspiration rather than improving student outcomes. Hattie (2015a) and Robinson (2019) contend that instructional leadership provides a more effective approach to leadership because it focuses on leadership activities that improve student learning like classroom observations, high quality professional learning for teachers, high academic standards, and an environment that supports learning (Hattie, 2015)

Robinson (2008) found that “the average effect size of instructional leadership on student outcomes was three to four times that of transformational leadership” (p. 635). Robinson (2019) developed an instructional leadership model to help teachers become better student-centred leaders, identifying five leadership dimensions that improve student learning. They were: establishing goals and expectations, resourcing strategically, ensuring quality teaching, leading teaching and learning and development, and providing an orderly and safe environment. Robinson

(2019) identified three leadership capabilities that support the five dimensions: applying relevant knowledge, solving complex problems, and building relational trust. Robinson (2019) argued that effective instructional or student-centred leadership occurs when the three leadership capabilities support the five dimensions of practice.

Few scholars critique the idea that the principal should not be an instructional leader. However, several scholars have suggested that the principal is more than just an instructional leader (Corrigan & Merry, 2022; Dosen & Rieckhoff, 2016; Hallinger, 2005). Principals perform a variety of leadership roles within a school and cannot focus on instruction alone (Hallinger, 2005). Dosen and Rieckhoff (2016) noted that “The Catholic school principal is an instructional leader, a pastoral leader, and the chief executive officer” (Dosen & Rieckhoff, 2016, p. 3). Corrigan and Merry (2022) found that “teachers and students prefer the integrated leadership style, which combines instructional and transformational leadership” (p. 1). Instructional leadership is essential to school leadership but must be balanced with other leadership models. For example, the principal of large secondary CEWA school will require a range of leadership models to to lead in the areas of student enrolment, parent engagement, staff development, marketing, capital development, teacher and student wellbeing, staff development, recruitment, staff conflict, compliance and reporting, teaching and learning, pandemic management and faith formation. CEWA leadership models do support an instructional approach to leadership; however, they also argue for a connection with Gospel values which precedes any focus on instructional leadership (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009; Catholic Education Western Australia, 2021b).

2.11.4 Christ-Centered Servant Leadership

Servant leadership is commonly cited as a model of leadership appropriate to Catholic school leaders (Catholic Education Western Australia, 2021b; Lavery, 2011, 2012). The concept of servant leadership is usually attributed to Greenleaf (1977). For Greenleaf (1977), “the servant leader is servant first” (p. 13). As the name suggests, servant leadership inverts the traditional model of hierarchical leadership, where the leader issues directives to followers (Blanchard, 2022). Instead, the servant leader serves and supports others to achieve shared goals (Northouse, 2019). To achieve their influence, servant leaders ensure their followers' needs are met and that

followers grow and develop into healthy, wise, autonomous leaders capable of developing other servant leaders (Greenleaf, 1977, 1998). Servant leaders also pay special attention to the marginalised and their leadership aims to bring about the best in and for others.

Servant leadership could be considered an antidote to styles of leadership that are self-serving. Greenleaf (1977) felt that society, and its leaders, were becoming too focused on personal interest and, consequently, were not serving the common good. For Greenleaf (1977), Servant leadership is a model that focuses on developing others, taking care of the common good, and providing hope to others. Blanchard and Hodges (2005) argued that “servant leadership provides better leadership” as it enables leaders to overcome common derailers of effective leadership (p. 198). Having humility allows a leader to ask for help. Supporting others increases the skill of the organisation. Collins (2009) linked servant-oriented leadership to high performance in organisations. Salem (2020) found servant leadership contributed positively to organisational performance and strongly predicted improved trust and positive behaviours. Although Greenleaf (1977) attributed his inspiration for servant leadership to Herman Hesse’s novel *Journey to the East*, servant leadership closely aligns with Catholic leadership models.

Substantial writing about Catholic school leadership describes the principal as a servant leader. For example, Lavery (2012) commented that “the concept of service is unreservedly applicable to principals in Catholic schools who are called to lead in the spirit of Jesus” (p. 39). Dosen and Rieckhoff (2016) argued that “servant leadership provides Catholic school principals with a rock solid foundation. The one who wishes to lead must be the servant of the rest” (p. 16). Nsiah and Walker (2013) found servant leadership to be a powerful influence in Secondary Catholic schools. They observed five aspects of servant leadership: “faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, community-inspired vision, relational credibility, sustained trust, and service” (2013, p. xi).

In the context of CEWA, principals are encouraged to be servant leaders. A guiding document for CEWA Principals, *The Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009-2015* (2009), stated that

all who are called to leadership roles in Catholic schools, especially principals, must remember that, as leaders in the Church, theirs are roles of

Christian service. For staff, parents and students, they are to reflect the Christ who came to serve rather than to be served” (para 95)

Although servant leadership is a recognised model of leadership in Catholic education, some scholars, and institutions, such as CEWA, see servant leadership as a model embedded in the broader concept of Christ-centred leadership.

Various scholars have addressed the concept of Christ-centred or Christian leadership (Adair, 2001; Edwards, 1989; Sofield & Kuhn, 1995). The name Christ-centred is self-explanatory. Leaders centre their leadership style on the behaviour of Jesus. In his seminal work on leadership, Edwards (1989) argued that the Australian Church would benefit from following a Christ-centred leadership style. Edwards felt leaders had much to learn from Jesus' use of power. In the context of Christian thinking, Jesus is all-powerful. The son of God controls the seas, feeds the hungry, heals the sick and overcomes death. Yet, as powerful as Jesus is, Jesus uses his power for people, not against them. For Edwards, Jesus uses his power to teach, heal and transform. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus invites rather than commands people to follow him. For Edwards, Jesus' leadership emphasised non-violence rather than coercion. It emphasised “leadership from below rather than above” (p. 95). Edwards saw Jesus' model of leadership was “participatory” and “empowering... rather than overpowering” (p. 95).

Sofield and Kuhn (1995) saw Jesus as the “indispensable” model of Christian leadership (p. 33). They identified eleven characteristics of Jesus' leadership, which included: (1) listening carefully to people, (2) remaining responsive to people's needs, (3) having a clear vision of a preferred future, (4) authentically expressing your personality, (5) showing compassion to others, (6) forgiving others and healing their burdens, (7) communicating straightforwardly, (8) being generative, focusing on others rather than self, (9) involving and including others, especially the marginalised, (10) empowering others and (11) committing to a life of integrity despite the consequences. Likewise, Adair (2001) noted that Jesus' leadership was exemplified by service, humility and sharing in adversity.

Christ-centred leadership is strongly emphasised in all formal CEWA documents about leadership. For example, the guiding theological document for CEWA, *The Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009-2015* (2009) states that it is essential “that school leaders continue to become

more like Jesus in how they think, hear, speak and behave” (para 92). CEWA's Quality Catholic Education Framework, a document that frames CEWAs focus as an organisation, includes the vision to be “a Christ-centred and child-focused community of engaged learning environments, inspiring all to actively live the Gospel” (Catholic Education Western Australia, 2021d). Likewise, CEWA's Strategic Directions (2019-2023) lists “inspiring Christ-centred leaders” as its first strategic objective (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2019). Similarly, CEWA’s Leadership Framework (2021b) is based on the leadership behaviours of Jesus. The Catholic School Principal Duties and Responsibilities (2021a) described four pillars that underpin a principal’s effective leadership: Catholic Identity, Education, Community and Stewardship. Although all those pillars touch on different aspects of leading effectively, CEWA encourages its principals to anchor their leadership in a Christ-centred servant-oriented model of leadership.

2.11.5 Distributed Leadership

The models of leadership examined so far have focused on individuals. However, for at least two decades, educational scholars have recognised that “the phenomenon of leadership is shared or distributed and does not solely rest on the individual principal” (Ng Foo Seong, 2019, p. 23). The concept of distributive leadership refers to the notion that there are multiple sources of leadership in schools and that principals can empower others (Bush & Glover, 2012; Harris, 2013). Successful leaders do not just delegate tasks to their team; they share the leadership process with other team members and take responsibility for supporting those team members in their leadership (Harris, 2013). For example, principals may allocate roles to other senior staff members with the requisite experience, expertise and leadership capability (Ridden & De Nobile, 2012). Often these staff form part of the SLT. The emergence of SLTs in contemporary schools has sometimes been considered an example of distributed leadership (Abbott & Bush, 2013).

Several scholars have argued that contemporary leaders are effective when they employ a distributed leadership approach (Harris, 2008, 2013, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2008, 2020). Day et al (2009) suggested the most effective school leaders were using distributed leadership. Leithwood et al. (2020) saw a strong relationship between distributed leadership and student achievement. Hattie (2015a) conceptualised distributed leadership as a driver of student success. Harris (2013)

argued that distributed leadership requires a shift in mindset. She commented that “distributed leadership means actively brokering, facilitating and supporting the leadership of others” (p. 546-547). Principals that share their leadership with an SLT are taking a distributed approach to leadership (Bush & Glover, 2012). Principals also distribute their leadership to middle leaders. Bryant et al (2018) for example, argued that "middle leadership accounts for the largest proportion of leadership activity in schools" (p. 2). Harris contended that distributed leadership could have a dark side. When executed unethically, distributed leadership “is little more than a palatable way of encouraging gullible teachers to do more work” (p. 548). Distributed leadership works effectively when leaders support other leaders to lead.

2.12 Summary

The final section of the literature review explored the models of leadership CEWA principals were likely to employ in leading their SLTs. Transactional leadership was defined as a leadership style based on transactions, rewards, and punishment for follower compliance. Catholic principals could draw on transactional leadership to establish a safe, orderly environment with clear expectations. Transformational leadership was described as a style that inspired and motivated followers to reach their potential. Catholic principals could use transformational leadership to share a vision with followers and encourage their followers to achieve it. Instructional leadership recognised that the role of a principal is to lead excellence in teaching and learning. CEWA principals call on instructional leadership when they focus their leadership on deliberately improving teaching and learning. Christ-centred servant leadership was described as service to others following the exemplary standards modelled by Jesus. Christ-centred leadership is at the heart of leadership in a Catholic school. Distributed leadership recognised that leadership is a function that involves the contribution and leadership of others. CEWA principals can employ a distributed leadership approach in distributing roles and responsibilities to members of their SLT and in supporting them in their roles rather than just delegating tasks. This section helped address research sub-question four: How do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive the principal’s role in the SLT?

2.13 Conclusion

This review of the literature examined six areas of literature relevant to the overarching research question: What are the characteristics of SLTs in high-performing CCSS? These six areas included the concept of a team, the role of teams in schools, the emergence of SLTs, the characteristics that enhance SLTs, the characteristics that inhibit SLTs, and leadership models that inform the principal's role in the SLT. The following chapter presents the research plan used in the study.

Chapter 3

The Research Design

3.1 Introduction

In chapter two, the researcher examined six areas of literature relevant to the overarching research question: What are the characteristics of SLTs in high-performing Catholic Education Western Australia Composite and Secondary Schools (CCSS)? These six areas of literature included the concept of a team, the role of teams in schools, the emergence of SLTs, the characteristics that enhance SLTs, the characteristics that inhibit SLTs, and leadership models that inform the principal's role in the SLT. As a result of exploring the six areas of literature, four questions were developed that outlined the research focus. These four sub-questions are listed below:

1. What characteristics do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as supporting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS?
2. What characteristics do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing CCSS?
3. What resources or professional learning do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs in high-performing CCSS?
4. How do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive the principal's role in the SLT?

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the research design. The chapter includes an account of the study's theoretical framework, the chosen research methodology and its methods. Additionally, the chapter outlines the researcher's motivation for engaging with the research participants, the trustworthiness of the research, the methodological rigour, data analysis and ethical considerations. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the Research Design.

Table 3.1
Overview of Chapter Three: The Research Design

Section	Subheading	Subdivision
3.1	Introduction	
3.2	Theoretical Framework	
3.3	Epistemology	3.3.1 Constructivism
3.4	Theoretical Perspective	3.4.1 Interpretivism 3.4.2 Symbolic interactionism
3.5	Methodology	3.5.1 Case study 3.5.2 Instrumental case study 3.5.3 Criticism of case study methodology
3.6	Method	3.6.1 Interviews 3.6.2 One-to-one semi-structured interviews 3.6.3 Focus group interviews 3.6.4 Interview guide and process 3.6.5 Document search 3.6.6 Field notes
3.7	Research Participants	3.7.1 Sampling
3.8	Trustworthiness	3.8.1 Credibility 3.8.2 Transferability 3.8.3 Dependability 3.8.4 Confirmability
3.9	Methodological Rigour	
3.10	Data Analysis	3.10.1 Data condensation 3.10.2 Data display 3.10.3 Drawing conclusions and verifying data
3.11	Ethical Considerations	
3.12	Potential Limitations of the Research	
3.13	Research Design Summary	
3.14	Chapter Conclusion	

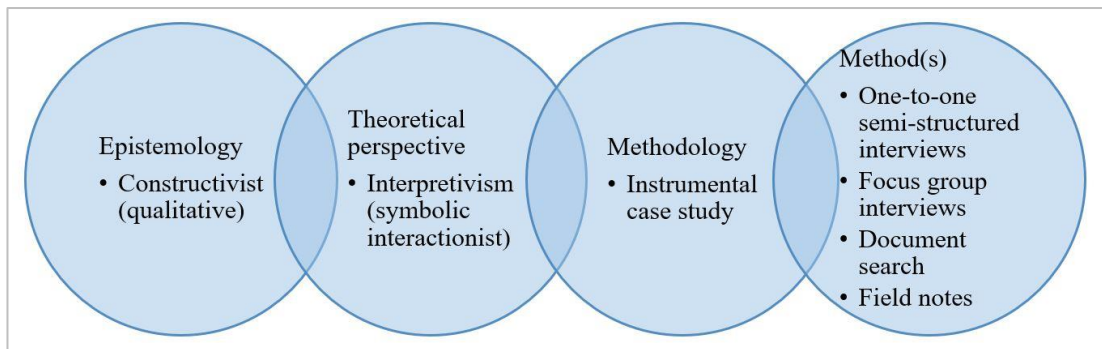
3.2 Theoretical Framework

O'Donoghue (2019) observed that research begins with the quest to "know something" about the world (p. 1). Cohen et al. (2011) argued that humans generate knowledge through three lenses: personal experience, reasoning and research (p. 3). For Cohen et al. (2011), experience and reason provide humans with pragmatic ways to learn about the world. However, research offers a more systematic and critical way

to generate truth and understand phenomena. Although researchers strive to make their research as truthful and trustworthy as possible, many scholars contend that a researcher's subjectivity shapes their approach to research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Crotty, 1998; Louis et al., 2011). Creswell and Poth (2018) do not see researcher subjectivity as a problem but as something essential to the theoretical framework that underpins research. (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Crotty, 1998; Louis et al., 2011).

A theoretical framework describes the systematic way a researcher's beliefs about the world shape their research. According to Crotty (1998), a theoretical framework is comprised of four interactive elements: epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology and method (Crotty, 1998). Epistemology refers to the theory of knowledge a researcher holds about the world. The theoretical perspective is "the philosophical stance informing the methodology" (Crotty, 1998, p.9). Methodology refers to a researcher's plan for conducting research. The method defines how research data is collected (Crotty, 1998). Figure 3.1 presents The theoretical framework of this study.

Figure 3.1
Theoretical Framework of this Study



Note: The concepts for Figure 3.1 are based on the work of Crotty (1998, p. 9)

Epistemology

Epistemology refers to the study of knowledge and its formation (Crotty, 1998). O'Donoghue (2019) described epistemology as a study of the way "knowledge is generated and accepted as valid" (p. 9). Epistemologists are interested in examining how humans know something is genuine or trustworthy (Crotty, 1998). Epistemological beliefs exist on a spectrum (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Crotty, 1998, Patton, 2015). On one side of the spectrum, positivists and post-positivists argue that

"there is a real world with verifiable patterns that can be observed and predicted" with the right tools and measurements (Patton, 2015, p. 105). For example, a medical researcher determining the cause of blood cancer through objective laboratory testing exemplifies a positivistic approach. The researcher pursues their research as if there is some ultimate truth to be diagnosed, described and treated. At the other end of the epistemological spectrum are constructivists and postmodernists. They argue that the world is filtered through human beliefs and perceptions and that humans can never uncover the ultimate truth only versions of reality (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Consider, for example, a social researcher exploring cancer patients' perception of hair loss during chemotherapy. The researcher will likely find multiple truths rather than a single cause (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Patton (2015) suggested that different epistemological approaches suit different research questions. He argued that the human and natural worlds are different and must be "studied differently" (p. 120). Positivist and post-positivist approaches tend to be suited to the natural world and to issues of causality. Constructivist and post-modern approaches are more suited to the social world where research questions focus on understanding and experience. Given this research has a strong focus on perceptions of senior leadership teams, constructivism was chosen as the epistemology underpinning this research.

3.2.1 Constructivism

Crotty (1998) described constructivism as the philosophical view that humans construct all knowledge and meaning by interacting with others within a social context. Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested that the goal of social constructivist research is "to rely as much as possible on the participant's view of the situation" (p. 24). Patton (2015) noted that "social constructionists study the multiple realities constructed by different groups of people and the implications of those constructions for their lives and interactions with others" (p. 121). As touched on earlier, because this thesis is interested in school leaders' perceptions regarding senior leadership teams' characteristics, the epistemology selected for this research is constructivism, specifically, social constructivism. The researcher sought to understand SLTs from participant accounts and compared participant accounts with views from the extant literature on SLTs.

Constructivism is often linked to qualitative research (Crotty, 1998). Creswell and Poth (2018) defined qualitative research as an inquiry process that seeks to understand human issues in their natural settings (p. 326). Qualitative researchers are fascinated by the meaning of a phenomenon and how that meaning is made (Paton, 2015). Qualitative researchers analyse and report on participants' views of a phenomenon. They strive to create complex and holistic understandings of the phenomena they study.

In contrast to quantitative research, which aims to remove the researcher from the research, qualitative research has a personal touch (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015b). Paton (2015) noted that "the researcher is the instrument of inquiry" and that "their background, experience, training, skills" influences the research (p. 1). For example, in this research, the researcher's experience is relevant to the research. The researcher works in leadership development at CEWA and has supported and developed CEWA leaders and their teams. The researcher's motivation to research SLTs comes from a desire to understand how SLTs work and how they can be improved. The researcher's immersion in the study's context is not seen as something to eliminate but as a contextual factor that may support the development of insight into SLTs.

The objectives of qualitative research differ greatly from the aims of quantitative research (Paton, 2015). Quantitative research is interested in facts and causes and aims to minimise the impact of the researcher. Qualitative research focuses on social happenings and meanings dependent on the researcher's data collection and reasoning. Patton (2015) commented on the difference between quantitative and qualitative research in his analogy of a baby's birth. For example, the birth of a baby in a hospital is often conceptualized quantitatively rather than qualitatively. Hospital staff collect significant amounts of measurable data about a baby's birth, including weight, height, pulse, respiration, the time of birth and length of stay in the hospital. Such facts are important, but they do not produce knowledge about the meaning of the baby's birth to the family's or society involved. A qualitative account of the baby's birth might focus on describing the responses of mother, father, and grandparents to the child's birth (Patton, 2015). Quality research is important because it articulates how participants generate social meaning about phenomenon that matter to humans. Qualitative uncovers the meaning of human activity. Likewise, in this research, the researcher selected a qualitative approach

because they wanted to understand what principals and SLT members thought made an SLT effective. This is not to say that quantitative research does not have an important place in the study of SLTs; rather, it seemed important to first investigate the perceptions of principals, SLT members, and middle leaders regarding effective SLT before deciding on what characteristics should be measured.

3.3 Theoretical Perspective

Theoretical perspective refers to the philosophical stance "behind a methodology" (Crotty, 1998, p. 81). It is "a way of looking at the world and making sense of it" (Crotty, p. 16). For Crotty, "different ways of viewing the world shape different ways of researching the world (p. 81). Derived from social constructivist thinking, the theoretical perspective of this research is interpretivism. Interpretivism is often linked with constructivism and focuses on the social construction of meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

3.3.1 Interpretivism

According to Crotty (1998), interpretivism is a theoretical perspective that "looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social world" (Crotty, p. 81). Bryman (2012) described interpretivism as "an epistemological position that requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action" (p. 712). Interpretivism is linked to the work of German sociologist Max Weber who argued social science should focus on understanding not causation (Crotty, 1998). Likewise, Alharahsheh and Pius Helmi (2020) pointed out that "human beings cannot be explored in a similar way to physical phenomena" (p. 41). Whereas positivists are interested in what causes phenomena, interpretivists aim to understand what research participants think and how that is connected to their actions.

Crotty (1998) identified three forms of interpretivism: hermeneutics, phenomenology and symbolic interactionism. Hermeneutics focuses on the systematic uncovering of meaning that subjects are unaware of. Phenomenology targets the essence of an experience. Symbolic interactionism articulates the lived experiences of people from the "standpoint of those studied" (Crotty, p. 91). This researcher chose a symbolic interactionist approach as its theoretical perspective as

they wanted to uncover the perceptions of principals, SLT members, and middle leaders, regarding SLTs.

3.3.2 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is associated with the work of George Mead and his student Herbert Blumer (Patton, 2015). Symbolic interactionism makes three assumptions (Crotty, 2020). One, human action is driven by socially generated understandings. Two, understanding is negotiated through dialogue and interaction with others. Three, humans interpret the world differently (Crotty, 1998). Symbolic interactionists seek to understand the world by taking the perspective of research participants seriously. They emphasise the "importance of meaning and interpretation as essential human processes" (Patton, 2015, p. 133). In symbolic interactionism, researchers try to understand their participants through conversations and interviews. As Crotty (1998) observed: "only through dialogue can one become aware of the perceptions, feelings and attitudes of others and interpret their meanings and intent (, p. 91). Symbolic interactionists look deeply into these conversations, looking for patterns, themes and symbols (Patton, 2015).

The researcher chose symbolic interactionism as its theoretical perspective because they sought to better understand SLTs from the standpoint of those who both made up SLTs (principal and senior leaders) and those who experienced the behaviour of the SLT (middle leaders). This research studied participant perceptions of SLTs in high-performing CCSS. Data was gathered and studied to articulate the experiences of participants. Participant data was integrated with insights from the literature review to produce a model of an effective SLT. This model is shared in Chapter Six: Review and Conclusions.

3.4 Methodology

Methodology refers to a researcher's "strategy, plan of action, process or design" (Crotty, 2020, p. 8). As the framework of this research is interpretive and symbolic interactionist, it made sense to use a methodology that provided an in-depth study of the participants investigated in this study. Therefore, the methodology chosen for this research was case study.

3.4.1 Case Study

Case study research focuses on "holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 2009, p. 4). Case study research can involve individuals, groups, organisations or incidents (Yin, 2009). The group or event chosen by the researcher is called the case, and the researcher's goal is to gain an in-depth study of that case. Paton (2015b) argued that cases could be based on people, groups or ideas. He provided examples of case studies which included studies of "resilience, excellence [or] living with HIV" (p. 259). Case studies have natural boundaries and borders and are studied in their natural settings (Yin, 2009). Case studies can be framed by themes or seen as instances of a theme (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 98). Common methods that support case study analysis are observations, interviews, documents, reports and audio-visual material (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Yin, 2009).

Case study research has a rich history in psychology, medicine, law, political science, and education (Yin, 2009; Patton, 2015). Some contemporary examples of case study research include the influence of COVID-19 on teaching (Howley, 2022) or the management of anorexia nervosa in pregnancy (Galbally et al., 2022). Case study research is one of the most common methods of studying SLTs in schools (Bush et al., 2012; Cranston & Ehrich, 2004). Case studies of SLTs have been considered useful because specific research on schools is limited and case studies provide an opportunity to develop an in-depth understanding of how school stakeholders conceptualise SLTs.

Case studies can take various forms (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Some common examples include intrinsic, collective, and instrumental case studies. An intrinsic case study focuses on the content of a case itself. For example, what happened when a new learning program was brought to a school. In a collective case study, researchers select multiple cases that illustrate a single issue. It could be that three teams were affected differently by an event like COVID-19. An instrumental case study tends to focus on a single concept. For example, this research is interested in the phenomenon of SLTs. In this study, the researcher has studied SLTs in three school sites to illustrate the concept of the SLT. Such an approach is termed an instrumental case study.

3.4.2 Instrumental Case Study

The methodology of this study is instrumental case study. An instrumental case study uses a case to explore an issue or a theory that interests the researcher (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Paton (2015) noted that instrumental studies are useful when seeking to provide program and policy decision-makers with reliable results that inform professional decisions. Consistent with Paton's (2015) understanding of the value of instrumental case studies, instrumental case study methodology was chosen in this study because the researcher wanted to understand the concept of an SLT and, from this understanding, provide insights that would inform CEWA's approach to SLTs.

3.4.3 Criticism of Case Study Methodology

Case study methodology is common in social science research but has received criticism (Yin, 2009). Patton (2015) noted that some researchers have trouble defining the very notion of a case and argued that researchers need to identify the boundaries of their case. Three main boundaries define this case into the characteristics of SLTs. First, the selected schools are Catholic schools. Second, the schools are located in the state of Western Australia. Third, the schools meet the criteria of high-performing schools (See Figure 3.2). Yin (2009) observed that case studies could lack rigour and be biased by researcher presuppositions. He argued that on too many occasions: "the case study investigator has been sloppy, has not followed systematic procedures, or has allowed equivocal evidence of biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions" (p. 14). Yin (2009) also commented that some scholars believe case studies lack generalisability because they can only exemplify a single case which cannot be extrapolated to other participants.

The researcher has addressed the above criticisms of case study research in this study. First, the researcher clearly defined their methodology as an instrumental case study. The purpose of an instrumental case study is to purposively select rich examples to study as a case that exemplifies the phenomenon of an SLT. Second, to counter the notion that the researcher's biases influenced the results, the researcher established rigorous research processes, including member checking, thick descriptions of participant views, and reflective field notes. Some critics have suggested that case studies have limited generalisability (Yin, 2009). But to some extent, as Yin has indicated, this criticism ignores the actual purpose of case study

research which is to provide specific and in-depth knowledge about a single case. Yin (2009) endorsed the value of single case studies when their insights can be generalised about a concept or a theory rather than a population. This researcher followed Yin's (2009) guidance and aimed to research one case in depth to illustrate the characteristics of an SLT. The case data were derived from three school sites, ensuring a depth of data collection but focusing on one case.

3.5 Method

Methods refer to the techniques, tools and procedures used to gather data in a research project (Crotty, 1998). Four methods of data collection were employed in this study. They were one-to-one semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, document search and field notes. These data collection methods were chosen because they provided personalised data that gave insights into the participants' experience and worldviews regarding the characteristics of the SLT. One-to-one structured interviews enabled the researcher to focus on the research question whilst allowing participants to elaborate in depth. The use of focus group questions enabled a group of middle leaders to share their thoughts about SLTs. Finally, documents and field notes provided the study context and helped confirm, test and verify research conclusions. The use of multiple sources of data triangulated the research results.

3.5.1 Interviews

Interviews are common in qualitative research and are often considered an excellent way to access "people's perceptions, meanings, definitions of situations and constructions of reality" (Punch, 2009, p. 144). Stake (2010) noted three main uses of interviews: accessing unique information, aggregating people's thoughts, and discovering something that cannot be seen. Interviews are compelling because "they ask open-ended questions and probe for in-depth responses" (Patton, 2015, p. 38). Kvale (1996) explained that the interviewer's task was to uncover the experiences of others. Kvale (1996) contrasted different approaches to interviews by describing interviewers as either miners or travelers. An interviewer could be like a miner in using interviews to uncover buried gold. However, an interviewer could also be like a traveler passing through the interview and collecting stories on their travels. As an interviewer, the researcher conceptualised themselves as a travelling miner - collecting stories but pausing to appreciate the gold. All interviews were recorded

digitally, transcribed, member-checked and coded for key themes regarding the characteristics of SLTs. The interviews were processed using Kvale's (1996) seven stages of an interview investigation which involved thematising, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analysing, verifying, and reporting (Kvale, 1996).

Bryman (2008) noted three main types of research interviews: structured, unstructured and semi-structured. Structured interviews have standard questions that must be asked of all research participants and often include fixed answers from which the interviewee chooses. Unstructured interviews focus on a topic but do not mandate specific questions. Unstructured interviews are used to gain a general understanding of a phenomenon that requires deeper inquiry. Semi-structured interviews have fixed questions but enable research participants to explore or elaborate on answers (Bryman, 2012). The researcher chose to use semi-structured interviews.

3.5.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Punch (2009) noted that the choice of interview techniques depends on the researcher's purpose. The researcher chose one-to-one semi-structured interviews because they gave the researcher enough structure to ask common questions and enough latitude to explore participant perceptions of SLTs in depth (Kvale, 1996). The researcher employed one-to-one semi-structured interviews with principals and SLT members in this research. Additionally, two focus groups of middle leaders engaged in semi-structured interviews for each school. One-to-one semi-structured interviews are useful because they allow the researcher to maintain some rigour by asking the same questions and flexibility to pursue responses that shed light on the studied phenomenon.

3.5.3 Focus Group Interviews

Focus groups were employed in this study with middle-leader participants. Focus groups involve collecting a small number of participants to answer the research questions together (Morgan, 2019). Focus groups are used to get another perspective on a phenomenon and are often used with other interview techniques like semi-structured interviews (Silverman, 2014). In addition, focus groups are often employed as a qualitative method to collect data through group discussion and interaction (Morgan, 2019). Through the discussion and interaction of group

members, researchers can generate a thorough understanding of the phenomenon researched.

The researcher invited ten selected middle leaders from each school to provide information about the characteristics of the SLTs. Each school's ten middle leaders were divided into two focus groups. Small groups of five middle leaders were chosen for two reasons. One, smaller groups were considered to have less impact on the school's daily operations. Two, smaller focus groups allowed all individuals to share their perceptions about the SLT. The data provided by the middle leader focus groups were used to test and verify SLT member perceptions regarding the characteristics of the SLT. The researcher used a nearly identical interview guide with the middle leader focus groups (Appendix C) . Some lead-in interview questions differed between the middle leaders and individuals from the SLT because of their different roles in the school. Middle leaders were asked the same seven core questions as SLT members and the principal. The focus group interviews were recorded digitally, analysed, and coded for key themes regarding the four research sub-questions.

3.5.4 Interview Guide and Process

Creswell and Poth (2018) and Kvale (1996) recommended that researchers use an interview guide. An interview guide helps the interviewer stay on track and focus on the study's research questions. An interview guide was used in this study. The interview guide followed the guidelines established by Kvale (1996). Kvale (1996) recommended beginning an interview with interpersonally oriented open questions before focusing explicitly on questions linked to the overarching and research sub-questions. The researcher started all interviews with an interpersonal focus and reminded the interviewee of the purpose of the study and the ethical rights of the participants. The researcher also followed Creswell and Poth's (2018) suggestion to meet in a quiet, private and confidential space and to ensure all interview subjects had completed an informed consent form regarding the research. The interviews were recorded on three password-protected devices. When the interviews were completed, the researcher spent 15-20 minutes filling in field notes that provided additional data to help understand the phenomena investigated (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Table 3.2 outlines the research questions used in the interview guide and connects them to the research sub-questions.

Table 3.2*Connecting Research Sub-questions to the Interview Guide*

Specific research sub-question	Interview guide question
1. What characteristics do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as supporting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS?	2. What do you feel are the benefits of working as an SLT? 3. What is the team doing when it is performing at its best? 4. Are there any routines, rituals, or meetings that your team engages in regularly? 5. How does the team evaluate its performance?
2. What characteristics do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing CCSS?	7. When the team is not at its best, what might that look like? 8. How does the team deal with any conflict?
3. What resources or professional learning do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs?	9. What professional learning have you received to develop as a team? 10. If CEWA could do something to support SLTs, what would you recommend?
4. How do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive the principal's role in the SLT?	11. How do you see the principal's role in the team? 12. If the team disagrees with the principal, how is that managed? 13. What role do you think the Catholic faith plays in the principal's participation in the team?

3.5.5 Document Search

Documents are considered an important supplement to interviews in qualitative research (Creswell, 2018). Bryman (2012) defined a document as an object of interest to the researcher that can be read, has not been produced for social research, is preserved, and is relevant to the social researcher (Bryman, 2012). Following Scott (2014), Bryman suggested documents can be assessed by three criteria: credibility, representativeness and meaning. Credibility refers to the legitimacy of the document. A document should be free from "error and distortion" (Bryman, 2012, p. 544). Representativeness refers to how typical or representative the information in the document is of the researched phenomenon. Meaning refers to whether the evidence in documents is "clear and comprehensible" (p. 544).

The documents used in this thesis met both Bryman (2012) and Scott's (2014) criteria listed above. A document search was conducted for each school site to understand the school context and its approach to developing the SLT. Some examples of documents used in this study include:

- School materials relating to research participants, such as the school strategic plan or SLT role descriptions.
- The Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009-2015. A key CEWA document that provides the direction and vision of CEWA schools.
- Everyone leads: A whole system leadership framework (2021). The CEWA system leadership framework describes the qualities of Catholic educational leaders.
- Strategic Directions of Catholic Education 2019-2023. A key CEWA document that outlines the strategic aims of the CEWA system.
- Catholic principal duties and responsibilities (2021). A document that explicitly outlines the role and responsibilities of CEWA Catholic principals
- The Quality Catholic Education School Review (QCESR) report. A school-based document that accounts for the school's improvement journey over approximately two to three years.

3.5.6 Field Notes

Field notes are the researcher's observations about what happens in and around an interview (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Field notes provide additional data to help the researcher understand the phenomena investigated (Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018). Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018) described field notes as a recommended "means of documenting needed contextual information" (p. 381). Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018) argued "that qualitative field notes are an essential component of rigorous qualitative research"(p. 381). Field notes can "enhance data and provide rich context for analysis" (p. 381). Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018) observed that: "field notes serve many functions. Predominantly, they aid in constructing thick, rich descriptions of the study context, encounter, interview, focus group, and document's valuable contextual data" (p. 381).

Schwandt (2015) suggested field notes provide two forms of information: descriptive and reflective. Descriptive information is factual and immediate, relating to what is happening in an interview. Reflective information occurs after interviews or observations and includes the researcher's observations. Reflective field notes can take the form of memos or a reflective diary. The research used both approaches. Keywords were noted during the interview and were followed up with critical

reflections after each interview. The field notes followed the form suggested by Phillippi and Lauderdale (2018), which included: title, data collection dates, setting, participant demeanour, response to the interview and critical reflection on the interview or observations. The descriptive notes were written up after the interview in a digital notebook. As the research study progressed, the researcher would review the field notes and compose short memos reflecting on the overarching and sub-research questions. In addition to digital notes, the researcher also constructed diagrams about the research questions to clarify their thinking about SLTs. These diagrams were shared with stakeholders for feedback, such as principals and senior leaders in CEWA.

3.6 Research Participants

The participants in this study included three principals, three SLT teams, and six groups of middle leaders (two middle leader focus groups from each school). Table 3.3 provides an overview of the participants involved in the study.

Table 3.3
Participants Involved in the Study of the Characteristics of Senior Leadership Teams

Participant	Principal	SLT	Middle Leader Focus Group 1	Middle Leader Focus Group 2	Total Participants
School A	1	7	5	5	18
School B	1	4	5	4	14
School C	1	8	5	5	19
Total	3	19	15	14	51

All participants were invited to participate in the study. An invitation letter to participate in the research was sent to the principals (Appendix G), followed by all other participants (Appendix I, Appendix G, Appendix H). Participants were given an information sheet (Appendix J) about the study and a consent form (Appendix D, Appendix E, Appendix F). All interviews were conducted on the school site. Principals were interviewed first, followed by SLT members and middle leader focus groups.

3.6.1 Sampling

Sampling refers to the population chosen to explore the research phenomenon (Bryman, 2012). The research used purposive sampling. Patton (2015) describes purposeful sampling as a strategy of "selecting information-rich cases to study, cases that by their nature and substance will illuminate the inquiry questions being investigated" (p. 264). Research into SLTs has often employed purposeful sampling of contexts likely to exhibit characteristics of high-performing teams (Bush et al., 2012; Thomas, 2009; Wallace & Hall, 1994b). For example, SLT researchers have often aimed to sample SLTs from successful schools or with a reputation for effective leadership (Bush et al., 2012; Thomas, 2009; Wallace & Hall, 1994b). In using purposive sampling, SLT researchers worked from the notion that there may be a connection between strong leadership, high performance and effective teams. This study follows the purposeful sampling method employed by many SLT scholars because it aimed to find examples where SLTs were likely to have strong characteristics that researchers could learn more about (Bush et al., 2012; Thomas, 2009; Wallace & Hall, 1994a).

The three SLTs selected for this study, including the principal, and their respective middle leaders, were purposively selected from three high-performing CEWA Composite and Secondary Schools (CCSS). While definitions of high-performing schools are debatable (Crook & Turkington, 2018), SLT researchers have formed a consensus that high-performing schools display evidence of student academic gain and a culture of leadership and improvement (Abbott & Bush, 2013; Bush et al., 2012; Thomas, 2009). The chosen schools demonstrated the most robust academic performance (Year 12 examination results) in their school type (girls, boys and co-educational) over five years after ICSEA had been accounted for. Each school exhibited a positive reputation for effective leadership as determined by the School Improvement Advisor (SIA), a CEWA-appointed system leader responsible for supporting and overseeing secondary schools across CEWA. Each school demonstrated a culture of improvement, as described by their school Quality Catholic Education School Review, a CEWA school improvement process that details a school's improvement journey. The criterion for purposeful sampling is included in Figure 3.2.

Figure 3.2

Characteristics of High-performing Schools for this Study.



3.7 Trustworthiness

One initial critique of qualitative research was that it lacked the objectivity of quantitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). In some ways, this critique does not recognise the different purposes of quantitative and qualitative research. Qualitative research aims to enhance the understanding of a phenomenon, and quantitative research seeks to identify the cause of something (Stake, 2010). That said, qualitative researchers have responded to the critique of objectivity in qualitative studies by seeking to strengthen the rigour and trustworthiness of qualitative research (Stake, 2010). For example, the seminal work of Guba and Lincoln in the 1980s provided social research with four criteria that enhanced trustworthiness (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The four criteria of trustworthiness are credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. These criteria, and the researcher's adherence to each, will now be discussed. Table 3.4 provides a summary of the trustworthiness of this study.

Table 3.4
Evidence of Trustworthiness

Section	Quality criteria	Research techniques
3.8.1	Credibility	Researcher's background and experience at CEWA, Member checks, Progress updates, Field notes, Triangulation, Established methodology,
3.8.2	Transferability	Thick descriptions, Purposeful sampling
3.8.3	Dependability	Audit trail, Piloting of interviews, Research design
3.8.4	Confirmability	In-depth methodological descriptions

3.7.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the feasibility of a researcher's account of a social phenomenon (Bryman, 2012). Bryman (2012) suggested that credible social research meets three criteria. One, the research follows established methodological practice. Two, the study is shared with research participants. Three, the research data is triangulated.

This research met the criteria for credibility in three ways. First, the researcher followed the canon of qualitative research by conducting a qualitative, interpretivist, instrumental case study supervised by expert researchers. The research process is outlined in this chapter. Second, the researcher shared the research process with participants. The researcher submitted their results back to the researched participants through member checking. Member checking is "presenting a recording or draft copy of an observation or interview to the person providing the information and asking for correction or comment" (Stake, 2010, p. 126). The researcher also met with the principals of the participant schools to share initial results, as well as key CEWA stakeholders. They also reported back to the research participants with an executive summary of the research.

The researcher used triangulation to enhance credibility. Triangulation "entails using more than one method or source of data in the study of social phenomena" (Bryman, 2012, p. 392). Triangulation can involve the use of multiple

observers, sources of data, and methodologies (Noble & Heale, 2019). Stake (2010) saw triangulation as checking one's conclusions against other information. Likewise, Noble (2019) indicated that triangulation requires the use of multiple theories and methods in a research study.

Researchers can enhance triangulation by using different participant groups, drawing from different researchers, and using a range of theories and methods (Noble, 2019). This study used two triangulation methods. First, it triangulated data use by collecting data from three groups: principals, senior leaders and middle leaders. Second, the study enhanced methodological triangulation using various methodologies: semi-structured interviews, focus groups, document search and field notes. Furthermore, the research participants were drawn from three separate school sites. The research also used an extensive literature review, a document search and field notes to triangulate results and enhance credibility.

The researcher's experience and background also enhanced the credibility of the study. The researcher has professional credibility in education and within Catholic Education. The researcher is a former teacher who has worked as a Catholic Education leadership consultant for over five years. In the role of leadership consultant, they have worked with hundreds of leaders, and several SLTs. As an experienced leadership consultant, the researcher understands the Catholic educational context and the issues that schools and SLTs face.

3.7.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the ability of data to be relevant to other contexts (Bryman, 2012). The main criteria to ensure qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts is thick descriptions of the studied phenomenon. The use of thick descriptions provides the reader of the research with the grounds to determine the relevance of the research to the social context. This research engaged in the extensive use of thick descriptions of the research questions through reporting participant voices, as demonstrated in the results section of this thesis. These thick descriptions enabled participants to describe their experiences and perceptions of the issues facing SLTs. As a result, readers of the research are likely to observe contextual similarities between the research and their context.

3.7.3 Dependability

Dependability refers to the rigour of the research. Patton (2015) described dependability as "focused on the process of the inquiry and the inquirer's responsibility for ensuring that the process was logical, traceable, and documented" (p. 285). Bryman (2012) suggested that research should be auditable. The researcher should keep records of their research "at all phases of the research process" (p. 392). The records should include material relating to problem formulation, selection of participants, fieldwork notes, interview transcripts, and data analysis.

Bryman (2012) suggested peers can act as auditors to ensure this rigour has been established. In the case of this research, the researcher's supervisor and assistant supervisor played the role of peer auditors, ensuring the rigour of the thesis was maintained. This research adhered to the dependability criteria by pilot-testing interview questions with a former principal. The researcher also piloted the recording of interview data and the process of storing and transcribing the research data. All research process steps were recorded, as outlined earlier in this chapter. Additionally, the researcher engaged a research mentor and other mentors who had completed doctoral studies in educational leadership. Early research results were shared with experienced senior leaders involved in school improvement, and their feedback was sought. Finally, the researcher shared some of their results and results from the literature review as a conference paper at the National Catholic Education Conference in Melbourne in September 2022.

3.7.4 Confirmability

Confirmability refers to the attempts of the researcher to prevent their own bias from informing the research results (Patton, 2015). Bryman (2012) argued that "it should be apparent that they have not overtly allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations manifestly to sway the conduct of the research and the findings deriving from it" (p. 392-393). The researcher met the criteria of confirmability by using multiple thick descriptions from participant interviews to describe the results. In addition, the study design included one case study involving three sites, each with three participant groups, that ensured a range of perceptions were factored into the study's results. Other aspects that increase the confirmability of the research included that the data will be stored for five years so that researchers can test the relationship between the data and the conclusions. The use of field notes

as a form of reflection also enhanced the confirmability of this study. The researcher was able to reflect on and change their own understandings.

3.8 Methodological Rigour

Methodological rigour refers to the mechanism researcher's use to conduct research logically and accurately (Braverman & Arnold, 2008). Tobin and Begley (2004) commented that rigour is how researchers show "integrity and competence" (p. 390). Without rigour, "research may become fictional journalism, worthless as contributing to knowledge" (p. 390). To increase methodological rigour, Dikko (2016) noted the importance of piloting interview guides. In the case of this research, the interview guide was piloted with a former principal, also a school improvement advisor. As a result of this process, the researcher tested and refined their questions. The interview guide that was relevant to middle leader focus groups was shared with middle leaders at CEWA for feedback. Moreover, another area where the research demonstrates methodological rigour was its choice of knowledgeable research participants who could inform the research questions. The research participants included principals, SLT members, and middle leaders. These participants were included because they were directly involved in the SLT or impacted by it.

3.9 Data Analysis

Data analysis refers to exploring and making sense of the collected data (Miles et al., 2020). For Miles et al. (2020), it is data that allows you to "discover" something, "explore new ideas", and "develop hypotheses" (p. 7). One of the challenges of qualitative data is that there is no "formula" for its analysis, only "guidance" (Paton, 2015). Paton (2015) wrote: "no absolute rules exist...do your very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveal given the purpose of the study" (p. 522). The researcher followed Miles et al.'s (2020) data analysis process to render the data comprehensible. The process is outlined in Table 3.5. Miles et al. (2020) noted the importance of coding data for themes and identifying patterns. In addition, Miles et al. (2020) also indicated that data analysis is recursive, involving iterative processes of collecting, condensing, displaying data, drawing, and verifying conclusions. Table 3.5 provides an outline of Miles et al.'s (2020) recommended approach to data analysis which was followed in this study.

The researcher collected qualitative data through one-to-one semi-structured interviews, focus groups, field notes and document search. The one-to-one interviews, and focus group interviews, were digitally recorded. The researcher transcribed and checked the data using digital transcription software. The research followed Patton's (2015) advice to engage in as much transcription of data as possible as it provides "an opportunity to get immersed in the data, an experience that usually generates important insights" (Patton, 2015, p. 525). Transcripts were read multiple times before they were coded.

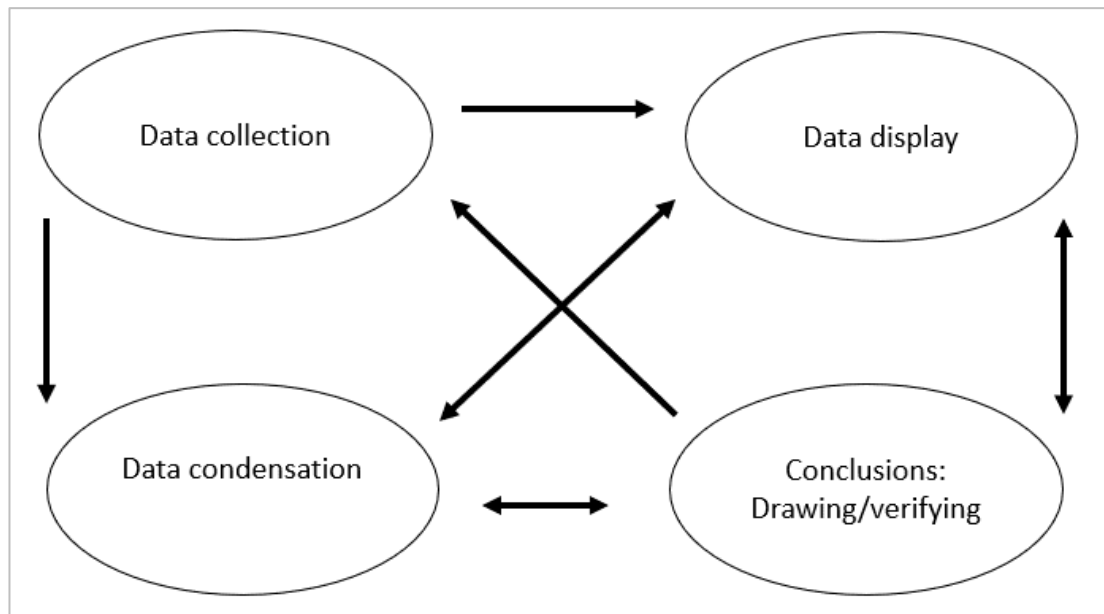
Table 3.5

Common Features in Qualitative Analysis (Miles et al., 2020)

1	Assigning codes or themes to a set of field notes, interview transcripts, documents and/or visual data
2	Sorting and sifting through these coded materials to identify similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, categories, themes, distinct differences between subgroups, and common sequences
3	Isolating these patterns and processes, and commonalities and differences, and taking them out to the field in the next wave of data collection
4	Noting reflections or other remarks in jotting, analytic memos, and/or journals
5	Gradually elaborating a refined set of assertions, propositions, categories, themes, concepts, and generalisations that cover the consistencies discerned in the database
6	Comparing those generalisations with a formalised body of knowledge in the form of concepts of theories

The collection of data and its analysis were not treated as endpoints. As the research progressed, that data was frequently re-examined. This iterative process of data analysis is depicted in Figure 3.3

Figure 3.3
Components of Qualitative Data Analysis: Interactive Model



Note: Adapted from Qualitative Data Analysis (Miles et al., 2020).

Data Condensation

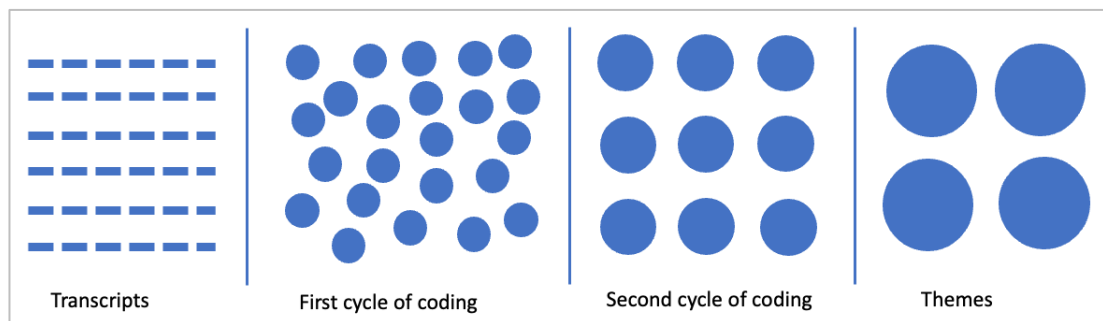
Data does not make sense on its own. The researcher must make sense of the data. Data condensation is the process of "selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and/or transforming the data" from the interviews and field notes (Miles et al., 2020, p. 8). Of this process, Patton (2015) reflected:

The challenge of qualitative analysis lies in making sense of massive amounts of data. This involves reducing the volume of raw information, sifting the trivial from the significant, identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of the data reveal" (p. 521).

Following the process established by Miles et al. (2020), the data were categorised to reflect key themes in the research. The researcher developed themes from the process of coding. Coding is labelling the data in transcripts and other notes (Miles et al., 2014, p. 71). Stake (2010) described coding, classifying and sorting data "according to topics, themes, and issues important to the study. Coding is for interpretation and storage more than for organizing the final report" (p. 151). Researchers use coding to make sense of large data sets and determine patterns. There are a range of coding methods. A common method used in coding is labelling a transcript, refining the

codes, and identifying themes relevant to the research question. Miles et al. (2020) emphasised different cycles of coding. In the first coding cycle, the researcher reads over the whole transcript and labels chunks of meaning relevant to the research question with a word or phrase. In the second coding cycle, the researcher reviews and adjusts these codes. Finally, the codes grouped by similarity are labelled as themes. This process is depicted in Figure 3.4. The research followed a similar process when coding their transcript and assigning codes and themes. A sample of this coding is provided in Table 3.6.

Figure 3.4
Data Analysis Process



Note: Figure adapted from concepts in Miles et al. (2020) and Saldana (2013)

Several scholars have commented on the challenge of making sense of large amounts of data (Bryman, 2012; Creswell & Poth, 2018). Bryman (2012) recommended that researchers use computer-assisted qualitative data analysis (CAQDAS) to assist with the data analysis (Bryman, 2012). The researcher used the computer software NVIVO to analyse the semi-structured and focus group data. The use of NVIVO analysis made the analysis of data manageable and the process of coding more efficient. Moreover, the interviewer used the process of writing memos after analyzing the data in NVIVO. The memos were written up in the software, Microsoft OneNote.

Table 3.6*Example of the Data Reduction Process for Research Question Two*

Relevant Research Question	Quotes	First cycle of coding	Second cycle of coding	Theme
What characteristics do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing CCSS?	"That's what bad looks like. It is [that person] having a crack at me"	Problematic team member	Unresolved conflict	Interpersonal strain
	"There is some tension here"	Unresolved tension	Unresolved conflict	
	"The people here with the personality clash are both quite strong"	Personality clash	Unresolved conflict	
	"I failed to go and have the conversation...I need to get better at that bit"	High agreeability	Unresolved conflict	

3.9.1 Data Displays

Data displays refer to organising and assembling data in a comprehensible form (Miles et al., 2020). Data should be collected in an accessible "compact form so that the analyst can see what is happening and either draw justified conclusions or move on to the next step of analysis" (p. 8). The data used in this research were grouped into themes and then displayed in matrix charts. Examples of participant comments were used in the results chapter to highlight a range of representative themes. The matrix charts included the research questions and the responses of each participant group.

3.9.2 Drawing Conclusions and Verifying Data

Miles et al (2020) suggested there is little point to qualitative research if it does not offer plausible conclusions. They argued that the process of drawing conclusions and verifying data begins early in the research process and is often revisited. Miles et al. (2020) noted that qualitative researchers generate meaning by "noting patterns, assertions, propositions, explanations and causal flows" (p. 9). The researcher kept memos and created graphic displays to aid the process of drawing conclusions and verifying data to represent ongoing thinking. The researcher shared these displays with the research participants, including principals and other senior

leaders in Catholic education, for feedback. Conclusions were drawn from this research by constantly comparing the perceptions of study participants and comparing these results with observations made from the literature. A consensus of the results was tabled and developed into a high-performing SLT framework. This framework is depicted in Chapter Six.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethics refers to principles governing a researcher's behaviour when conducting research. Silverman (2014) noted that some researchers forget to consider the impact of their research. For example, there is a long history of research where participants have been exploited in medical experimentation (Silverman, 2014). Byrne (2022) stated that "people must not be subject to harm in the course of research unless the potential harm has been explained to them and they have given free consent" (p. 4). Stake (2010) noted that the ethical dangers of social research are often mental and involve the potential for "exposure, humiliation, embarrassment, loss of respect and self-respect, loss of standing at work or in the group" (p. 206). Silverman (2014) highlighted that there are "safeguards" to ensure research is ethical (p. 139). For example, researchers should not exploit or deceive participants. Researchers must ensure participants provide "informed consent" (Byrne, p.4). Byrne (2022) argued that even when good comes out of such experiments, human beings must be allowed to agree to take part in research" (p. 3).

There are several actions researchers can take to provide informed consent. First, researchers should tell participants what their research is about. Second, researchers must state the research topic and methods used to collect data. Third, the research must be confidential and not negatively impact the research participants (Byrne, 2022). The researcher took the following actions to ensure their research met ethical standards. Ethics approval for the research was gained from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle campus (Appendix O). Research approval from CEWA was gained from The CEWA Research Approval Panel (Appendix N). The research was conducted following the standards and expectations established by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle campus, and The CEWA Research Approval Panel. Principals were asked for permission to conduct research in their schools. Research participants were provided with an email inviting them to

voluntarily participate (Appendix H, Appendix I, Appendix J). Finally, research participants provided informed consent (Appendix D, Appendix E, Appendix F). Participants were fully briefed on the research and provided with an information sheet (Appendix J, Appendix K, Appendix L). explaining the purpose of the research, the data collection methods, the ethical constraints of research, and the participant’s right to withdraw from the research at any time All participant data was de-identified and stored electronically on the researcher’s password-protected computer and shared only between the researcher and his supervisors. After submitting the thesis for examination, all research data will be stored at the University of Notre Dame for five years and then deleted. Table 3.7. provides a summary of the ethical considerations of this research.

Table 3.7
A Summary of the Ethical Considerations of the Research

1.	Approval
1	Ethics approval for the research was gained from the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle campus (Appendix O)
2	Research approval from CEWA will be gained from The CEWA Research Approval Panel (Appendix N)
3	All research participants were provided with information sheets detailing the nature of the research in plain English (Appendix J, Appendix K, Appendix L)
4	All research participants provided signed informed consent form (Appendix D, Appendix E, Appendix F)
5	All participant data was de-identified and stored electronically on the researcher’s password-protected computer and shared only between the researcher and his supervisors.

3.11 Potential Limitations of the Research

One potential limitation of this research is its generalisability. Generalisability refers to the capacity of the study to apply to other contexts. Patton (2015) suggested qualitative results can generalise where there is a similarity between research settings and populations. The instrumental case study included three SLTs in three CCSS. The research results are likely transferable to similar CCSS or Catholic schools in Australia. There are 29 metropolitan secondary and composite schools in Perth where this research shared "proximal similarity" (Patton, 2015, p. 710). Moreover, it is possible that similar Catholic secondary and composite

schools across Australia may find the research relevant to their context. This research is less easily generalised to contexts like the Department of Education or Independent schools. These school contexts may find the research of interest; however, it is recommended that other researchers investigate SLTs in these contexts to develop the limited literature on SLTs.

3.12 Research Design Summary

An outline of the Research Design is provided in Table 3.8. The timeline of researcher activities are listed below in Table 3.8.

Table 3.8
Outline of the Research Design Inclusive of Timeline and Researcher Activities

Schedule	Source	Activity
January - December 2020	UNDA	Complete Doctor of Education coursework and submit Research Proposal
January-2021	UNDA	Review the research proposal and modify it based on the feedback, Act on research proposal feedback from supervisors
March - April 2021	UNDA	Present research proposal to the School of Education, Gather and respond to feedback from the thesis presentation, Gain full candidature for Doctoral studies
May - June 2021	UNDA	Gain ethics approval from UNDA, Gain research approval from CEWA, Contact identified schools and SLTs (informal)
June-July 2021	UNDA	Pilot semi-structured interview questions, Piloted transcription service, Create a timeline for interviews
July-August 2021	CEWA schools	Invite schools formally to participate in research
October-December 2021	CEWA schools	Conduct all school-facing interviews with three schools, Transcribe interviews
January-March 2022	UNDA	Member check interview transcripts, Code and analyse interviews and field notes
March-September2022	UNDA	Write a Literature Review plan, Write up Results
October 2022	UNDA	Submit the first complete draft of the Literature Review, Review Results, Rewrite
November-December 2022	UNDA	Review and polish the Literature Review, Write Discussion

Schedule	Source	Activity
January 2023	UNDA	Review and complete the Discussion, Write Research Design, Write the Introduction and Review and Conclusion
February 2023	UNDA	Review the Research Design, Review the Introduction and Review and Conclusion, Assemble thesis
March-June 2023	UNDA	Review and edit Research Design, Complete draft executive summary, Proofread and format thesis
June 2023	UNDA	Submit thesis

3.13 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter provided an outline of the research design. The researcher explained the reasons for using the study's theoretical framework. The epistemology was described as constructivist. The theoretical perspective for the research was identified as symbolic interactionism. The methodology was instrumental case study. The research methods included semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, document search and field notes. The researcher explained the methods of data collection and analysis. They highlighted several efforts to enhance the study's trustworthiness and address ethical concerns. The researcher commented on the study's focus and issues regarding the generalisability of this research. The next chapter presents the results of the study.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Results

4.1 Introduction

The objective of this chapter is to present the results of this study. The study explored the characteristics of senior leadership teams (SLTs) in three high-performing Catholic Education Western Australia composite and secondary schools (CCSS) in Perth. The overarching question of this study was: What are the characteristics of SLTs in high-performing CCSS? To answer the overarching question, the researcher investigated the four research sub-questions listed below:

1. What characteristics do principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive as supporting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS?
2. What characteristics do principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing CCSS?
3. What resources or professional learning do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs?
4. How do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive the principal's role in the SLT?

To address the four research questions listed above, the researcher conducted 28 semi-structured interviews at three schools between October and December 2021. First, the researcher conducted ten interviews at School A involving the principal, seven SLT members and two focus groups of middle leaders. Next, seven interviews were conducted at School B, which included the principal, four SLT members and two focus groups of middle leaders. Finally, 11 interviews were conducted at School C, which included the principal, eight SLT members, and two focus groups of middle leaders. All interviews were transcribed using digital software and then coded into themes. The researcher analysed the data using the Miles et al.'s (2020) method of data analysis. To avoid identifying the schools and the participants interviewed, the researcher elected to report this study's results by personas rather than schools. For example, the results are presented from three personas: the principals' perspective, SLT members and middle leaders. While the principal is a member of the SLT, principal perceptions are included separately and not in SLT member results. For

convenience, the research sub-question addressed are included at the beginning of each section. Table 4.1 provides an outline of Chapter Four.

Table 4.1
Outline of Chapter Four: Presentation of the Research Results

4.1	Introduction
4.2	Characteristics principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive as supporting the effective functioning of the SLT
4.3	Summary
4.4	Characteristics principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLT
4.5	Summary
4.6	Resources or professional learning principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs
4.7	Summary
4.8	Principals, SLT members and middle leaders' perceptions of the principal's role in the SLT
4.9	Summary
4.10	Conclusion

Specific Research Question 1

What Characteristics Do Principals, SLT members, and Middle Leaders Perceive as Supporting the Effective Functioning of the SLT in High-performing CCSS?

4.2 The Characteristics Principals SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive as Supporting the Effective Functioning of the SLT in High-Performing CCSS

This section reports the perceptions of principals, SLT members, and middle leaders regarding research sub-question one: What characteristics do principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive support the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS? Principal perceptions will be outlined first, followed by SLT members and middle leaders.

4.2.1 Principal Perceptions of the Characteristics Supporting the Effective Functioning of SLTs

All three principals indicated that their SLTs functioned effectively when SLT members developed positive relationships, shared in the school's leadership and engaged with team members in an emotionally intelligent manner. The principals also suggested the SLT was more effective when they focused their work on vision and strategy rather than operational issues.

4.2.1.1 Positive Relationships. The principals described positive relationships as involving trust, care for each other, frequent positive contact with team members and the use of humour. Principals felt that positive relationships were strengthened by social engagement and trust. One principal commented that "trust is really important... you see the individuals you've got in your team as really good at what they do and...[and you help them] to have confidence in themselves, that they don't need to come and seek advice and help all the time". This principal went on to say that you must "absolutely trust that [the SLT] will make the decision and whatever the decision they make, whether it's the right or the wrong one, you will back them". One principal felt that positive relationships were cultivated through frequent contact with the SLT: "I would see [the SLT] pretty much...every day for a conversation. And I think just that connection and building that relationship is really important". This principal noted that positive relationships were further developed by "getting to know a bit about team members and their families or things that are going on for them and being aware of that too".

One Principal commented that their team worked best when they showed care for one another. They observed that the team was at its best when team members expressed "good relational connection in the leadership, that's when it's really humming, that's when it's really working well". This principal went on to explain that the SLT works well when

People are being really complementary in their work, in their roles, when people are saying, I know you're doing that whole exam timetable, [it] probably kept you up to midnight, last two nights in a row. Let me help you with some part of it, or what can I... When people pitch in, in other words, when they are working truly as a team, then even when they're busy, they're still willing to put themselves out there to assist to help. And if it's genuine,

it's really genuine. That's just a beautiful thing to watch happen because you feel like you're really working alongside someone in the trenches.

Another principal felt an ethic of care supported the SLT's team culture. This principal used meetings to “celebrate achievements, to acknowledge people...for work that they've done and so that people do feel valued, [when] they give their heart and soul to the job”.

Principals reported that positive relationships were enhanced by humour. One principal commented that their team was most effective “when there's laughter around the table, when there's people, even in the face of some adversity and some real challenges, still able to smile, to have a laugh”. They went on to say that it was their responsibility to improve the mood of the team by using humour: “I think you have to lead it. You have to be the person that breaks the ice and cracks a joke... You have to guide that, to enable that”. Another principal noted that, as the leader of the school, they employed humour to “make light somewhere along the way to brighten things up”. One principal reflected that the team was effective “when someone on the team cracks a joke about me and feels that they have the freedom to do that quite irreverently at times, but it's good”. Another principal noted that humour was important in the team, but it was other members that used humour to ease tension. All principals mentioned that social gatherings, professional learning, and spiritual retreats were contexts that strengthened positive relationships. All principals felt that positive relationships were supported by rituals such as prayer, which usually preceded all meetings in all SLTs.

4.2.1.2 Shared Leadership. All three principals felt the SLT worked effectively when team members shared in the school's leadership. One principal commented: “I think we get a real buzz when we do things well together”. They went on to comment on the importance of shared leadership:

It's about sharing. And I guess my real desire is to make sure that that's at the strategic level. So just continuing to get people to come back to our strategic plan, to be focusing in those meetings on that. And I think having those people who are skilled and knowledgeable experts in their field. I still work really closely with each of them that they're driving what's going on in there.

All principals aimed to share their leadership by assigning leadership portfolios to each SLT member. One principal commented that assigning leadership to a few leaders in large schools no longer worked. They commented: "the change in accountability meant that there were more and more things that needed to be attended to, and to roll them all into the basket that sat at the feet of just very few leaders didn't really work". This principal went on to say that "there's a greater efficacy of what we do because we've got a structure that's based around the specialisation of portfolios". Another principal commented: "I like that people feel that they can go off and do what they need to. That's a part of their responsibility. That's what they're leading. Then they bring it back and talk to us". Principals felt the team worked well when they also "pitched" in to help each other rather than focusing solely on their work. In one SLT, the principal published a clear description of the portfolios each SLT member was responsible for. Each portfolio of work contributed to the school's vision. Over time, each SLT member would try a different portfolio of work. Each portfolio of work contributed to the school's vision. All principals valued sharing their leadership with their SLTs.

4.2.1.3 Emotional Intelligence. Emotional intelligence refers to a person's "ability to respond adaptively in the emotional realm by reading and responding appropriately to others' emotions and to be aware of and have the ability to control one's emotions" (Passer & Smith, 2021, p. 788). Although the principals did not use the term emotional intelligence explicitly, all three principals recognised that the ability of SLT members to display emotional intelligence was critical to the SLT's efficacy. As a case in point, one principal commented that the SLT was at its best "when we can take a breath and settle and really see things for what they truly are. Then we're on the same page". Another principal believed that a strength of the team was its ability to be straightforward and non-judgemental: "We'll have our robust conversations. But I wouldn't say there's a lot of conflict within our Exec team, but certainly robust conversations and certainly everyone feels that they should speak up and be heard and that sort of thing". Another principal recognised that the SLT was able to move on from difficult issues without resentment. "We are not disharmonious. And we relate well to each other". All principals recognised that the emotional intelligence of team members was critical to the SLT's efficacy.

4.2.1.4 Prioritising Vision and Strategy. All principals indicated that their SLTs were at their best when the team focused on the school’s vision rather than being inhibited by operational duties. One principal commented that the SLT was most effective when “looking to the future and [focusing on] that big picture strategy work”. They felt the team worked better when team members were standing on the “balcony” (vision-focused) rather than “the dance floor” (operational-focused). Another principal emphasised that the team was effective when their thinking was focused on “our strategic plan”. Finally, one principal commented that the SLT was effective when it was not stuck in the “nuts and bolts” of running the school.

4.2.2 *SLT Perceptions of the Characteristics Supporting the Effective Functioning of SLTs*

All SLT participants perceived the SLT to be effective when there was evidence of positive relationships, shared leadership, emotional intelligence, and effective communication. In addition, several SLT members identified their team's response to COVID-19 pandemic was positive because it unified the SLT. Finally, some SLT members felt that a shared interest in improvement practices enhanced the SLT’s performance.

4.2.2.1 Positive Relationships. All SLT members recognised that having positive relationships enhanced the functioning of the SLT. Positive relationships were evident in the SLT when team members shared values, cared for each other, employed humour and forgiveness, and engaged in social activities and spiritual retreats.

Most SLT members indicated that sharing beliefs and values helped the SLT to be effective. Several SLT members felt they shared the beliefs and values of the Catholic faith and that a shared understanding of these values united the team. As one SLT member commented: "I think we are all very spiritual people. I think that really gives us a common lens to which we approach our work here". Another SLT member said that the SLT aspires to live “like Jesus, seeing the best in others...I think there's a real understanding for the majority that we all have our strengths. No one's perfect”. One SLT member reflected on the group's mutual respect: “I don't think there's a sense of we're in competition with each other for anything, so I think there's a lot of trust and respect that underlies what we're doing”. Another SLT member

explained that the SLT wanted the best for each other. They had "worked with people in the past whose main motivation of being involved in the leadership team is to further themselves. I don't think anyone in our group has that ambition". For some SLT members, the sharing of values helped inform effective decision-making. One SLT member observed: "Well, I think all our decisions are based on it being Christ-centred, child-focused. So, we continually bring that back". The sharing of values was supported by spiritual activities such as prayer, which was common in all SLT meetings: "It doesn't matter what faith you are; prayer is important. And I think it's just a time to reflect, whether meditation or whatever. It's the reflection aspect of it. I think that's probably one part. It is a binding force".

Several SLT members noted that caring for each other enabled the team to function effectively. For example, one SLT member commented: "From a team perspective, if one of the members is sick or one of the members is struggling with workloads and so forth, I think there's that compassion there. Then we look at how we can support that person". Another SLT member remarked: "When I come down, I always pop in, to check how [their] day went because I think it's important for us to see how [they're] travelling. So, I try and make it my duty to check". Care for other SLT members, said one member, was a team cultural norm: "That's just the way everyone treats each other. You walk past; everyone says hello, no one ignores you, which is not my previous experience. Everyone is caring, concerned, and will step up and help".

Some SLT members identified humour as a strategy that enabled the team to connect and resolve tension. For example, one SLT member said they dealt with conflict through humour: "We laugh a lot about it. What I like about the team is we don't get heated and worked up and take things personally, it's great". Another SLT member remarked: "So a good leadership team is supportive of each other. And that means also that if we support each other, we have really good, honest, humorous conversations". One SLT member used humour to provide another SLT member with difficult feedback: "So if an SLT member is being cranky or something like that, I'll just have a laugh at him and say, come on...haven't you had a coffee today?" Another SLT member reflected: "I know when we get to certain situations... Humour has always been good... And I'm quick with a comment". This person went on to say that humour was a "useful tool...as long as it's not pointed at anybody...I think when you throw it in at the right time it sort of re-energises".

Several SLT members recognised that the SLT functioned effectively when SLT members forgave one another. As one SLT member observed: “I pride myself on getting on with people, relationships, having the debate or the challenge, but then moving on and not holding a grudge”. Another SLT member said: “Sometimes it's worth realising...I can forgive. I can let that part of my brain relax. It's okay”. Another SLT member commented that conflict was resolved when team members practised forgiveness: “We might be a bit angry with each other. We might ignore each other for a few days, and then it's forgotten. The grudge is not there”.

Although SLT members had their own portfolios of work, several SLT members indicated that the SLT was more effective when SLT members helped each other with tasks. For example, one SLT team member observed: “We step in where there's a need”. Similarly, another SLT member observed: “Some of us have been here a while. We don't even have to ask... We just turn around, and the other person's there, and they come to assist, or they've found a gap, and they've filled it”. Not only do some SLT members support other SLT members in achieving their tasks, but several SLT members felt it important to develop fellow team members. For example, one SLT member commented: “I'm always trying to support [my colleague] in everything she needs. Sometimes that's giving her challenging feedback...because it's a bit of tough love sometimes, but it does provide success”.

Social activities beyond work were seen as helpful for strengthening relationships in the SLT. As a result, many SLT members engaged in non-work socialising during the year with other SLT members. Socialising was conceptualised as relaxing and a strategy for building trust amongst team members. As one SLT member commented:

I think those rituals are important because you create the rapport that enables you to then have that hard conversation, to give that little bit of feedback that is going to be a little bit tricky to navigate, but you can deliver it in a nice way because you know them really well.

Connected to the idea of socialising, several SLT members described spiritual retreats as an activity that helped bond the team. For example, one SLT member commented: when “we got away [we] just enjoyed each other's company and [were] not worried about [work]...I really enjoyed it and think maybe doing more of that

sort of stuff would be good”. In addition, many SLT members valued spiritual retreats to develop deeper relationships.

4.2.2.2 Shared Leadership. Several SLT members indicated that sharing in the leadership of the school was one of the keys to being an effective SLT. For SLT members, shared leadership meant sharing the leadership load, sharing a leadership vision, leading a portfolio of work, making decisions together, and helping other team members. For one SLT member, sharing leadership was a way to deal with the burden of an excessive and complex workload. This person remarked: “Having a larger team where you pull the expertise specifically in that area makes for a more effective team because we are [only] as strong as our team...we rely on the wisdom of the team”. For many SLT members, sharing leadership is synonymous with sharing a leadership vision or, as many SLT members remarked, being on the "same page". Another SLT member described the team’s shared vision as a case of “singing from that same song [sheet]”. Finally, one SLT member described shared leadership as a form of belonging: “We all feel like we're part of the decisions. We're in the know of what is happening. We're communicating well with each other, and there's robust discussion”.

Another aspect of shared leadership is taking responsibility for a portfolio of work. As one SLT member commented: “The other thing I see of value is that each person that sits around the table has his or her portfolio. So, in other words, they become, if you like, the mini expert on that, and it also provides an opportunity for the rest of us to hear what's going on”. However, while SLT members focus on their own portfolios, they also help other team members with their work. SLT members described shared leadership as both autonomous and connected. As one SLT member reflected: “When it's working well, it's like a lot of the members sort of understand what each other's portfolio is”. Another SLT member commented: “I've never seen a good leadership team that does not bounce off each other and chip in to help each other. And just because it's in your basket doesn't mean it's not in mine”. SLT members described shared leadership as a nuanced activity involving both personal responsibility and the support of other SLT members.

4.2.2.3 Emotional Intelligence. Some SLT members described the team as working effectively when SLT members displayed behaviours with strong emotional

intelligence. For example, one SLT member reflected: "I don't think I've ever had a situation where I think, it's getting a little bit prickly in here...I don't think that's the nature of the people that we have". Another SLT member observed that their team was effective when there "was an atmosphere where you're able to air a grievance. And I think generally people know that sometimes it doesn't always necessarily go the way you want it to go". One SLT member reflected on the importance of being emotionally attuned to fellow team members: "We're wise enough, and we've got the emotional intelligence enough to realise that if person A is not really Engaging in a positive [manner], don't go and prod. Go and support". A significant indicator of the SLT's emotional intelligence was the ability of team members to communicate effectively under stress.

Several SLT members described the ability to communicate effectively under stress as critical to the effective functioning of the SLT. For example, one SLT member reflected: "I think, like every good team, we can get a bit cranky with each other at times, but I think that we've never really entered into unprofessional dialogue. I think we've never gone on that easy approach of letting anger and emotion dominate our thought process". Many SLT members described the importance of SLT members managing their emotions and communicating effectively. As one SLT member explained: "Most of us in Exec...can be really honest with each other and have jokes and stuff. I think that we understand that we're not trying to step on each other's toes or we're not competing with each other for our jobs or anything like that". One SLT member explained the level of trust in the SLT:

We've been around each other a long time. So there's a strong trust element. If we had someone who arrived who didn't have that or couldn't be part of that team in the same way we, so say someone who had a big ego or wanted to climb the ladder and wanted to make a name for themselves. I think it would be pretty hard for them because we are quite tight and we are very honest with each other.

SLT members described a communication style that was open, straightforward, and non-defensive. For example, one SLT member noted, "If I have a problem with any of my colleagues, I'll sit with them face-to-face like this and say, I've got this problem, you know...I've got some concerns here, can we talk about this?" Another SLT member said, "I still think that if you are going to run a great

school, not a good school, but a great school, then you have got to be able to get that stuff out in the open”. One member commented: “If there is feedback, it's given in a way that is constructive...It's really important to say, well, how would we do that better...you feel safe to bring something to the table. But you won't take it personally”.

4.2.2.4 A Unified Focus in Response to COVID-19. Several SLT members commented that the SLTs response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 unified the SLT and made it more effective. One SLT member observed that the “mechanics” of managing COVID “made us come together”. Several SLT members observed that the pandemic provided the SLT with a clear problem to focus on. One SLT member said: “The time I thought it really showed how we worked together, is when COVID first hit because we all had one common goal...And in some ways, our defining roles disappeared for a short period of time. And it was okay”. Another SLT member observed that the pandemic forced teams to meet more often and communicate with each other more frequently. For most SLT members, COVID-19 encouraged the SLT to listen to each other, forget individual needs or issues and help the school community. One SLT member commented: “We just do it because we do what's best for the team and working together”. Even though COVID-19 was disruptive for many SLTs and schools, several SLT members reported that COVID-19 increased their efficacy because it forced the SLT to focus on common goals.

4.2.2.5 An Improvement Mindset. Some SLT members felt the SLT was functioning well when it engaged in growth and development processes that led to performance improvements. One SLT member commented: “I think we stay at our best because we don't just do what we always do. We're always open to change, always feeding back, always reviewing”. Another SLT member said: “I think it's important...that we keep evolving; it's got to keep evolving. You can't keep doing what you've always done. I think that's what makes us strong, is the constant evolution of everything we do”. For several SLT members, processes like peer feedback and personal reflection supported team improvement: “There's nearly always something that we can improve, and we tend to share that with each other. We also ask our staff, students, parents, through surveys, questions of the College's performance”. One SLT member described how they built improvement into their

daily commute: “I have a drive of 30 minutes either way. Every single day I think about what [I did well]. What could I do better?”

4.2.3 Middle Leader Perceptions of the Characteristics Supporting the Effective Functioning of SLTs

Middle leaders commented that various characteristics supported the effective functioning of the SLT. These factors included positive relationships, shared leadership, emotional intelligence, availability to stakeholders, respect for other staff, especially middle leaders, and effective communication.

4.2.3.1 Positive Relationships. Many middle leaders described the SLT as functioning well when there was evidence of positive relationships inside the SLT. For example, one middle leader described their SLT as a “well-informed, tight group. I’ve used the word ‘friendship’, which I don’t normally use when you describe an Executive team, but I do think there is a friendship there”. Another middle leader commented: “I definitely see it as more than collegiality. I do see it as a tight-knit group of friends”.

4.2.3.2 Shared Leadership. Middle leaders observed that the SLT was effective when SLT members led the school together. One middle leader commented: “It is a huge operation, and a huge operation isn’t singly managed by one person...everybody has their own little bit that they need to do”. Several middle leaders felt the SLT was working well when they stuck to their portfolios of work: “Each member of the ELT has got a very defined job role...I think that’s when we see them at their best”. Several middle leaders recognised that the principal was coordinating those roles and enabling the SLT to be their best.

4.2.3.3 Emotional Intelligence. Many middle leaders recognised the SLT functioned well when SLT members showed characteristics similar to emotional intelligence. For example, one middle leader described the SLT as effective when they were “visibly relaxed. And I mean that in a positive way, not in a lazy way. But visibly relaxed as individuals”. Another middle leader commented that the team was “quite harmonious”. Another observed that the SLT were “measured” and “not emotional”. Several middle leaders described the SLT as calm and centred, especially during challenging circumstances. Middle leaders felt the SLT was effective when

SLT members communicated in an emotionally intelligent way. Many middle leaders described this as communicating openly, transparently, and with kindness. As one middle leader commented: “It comes down to feeling that you've been listened to...That you've also spoken to in a way that is neither belittling, or bullying in any way. That you're spoken to in a professional way”.

4.2.3.4 Clear Communication. Many middle leaders felt clear communication made the SLT successful. As one middle leader observed: “So [when] they're at their best, everyone's in the loop, everyone knows what they're doing. The whole team is going in the right direction”. Various middle leaders spoke positively about the SLT's “open door” policy. As one middle leader explained: “Their doors are always open. So even in terms of our Business Manager, if there's a question you've got, he's free at his desk. You just knock on the door, and you can certainly ask him questions”. Various middle leaders commented that the SLT communicated well and was effective when the SLT was on the “same page”. As this middle leader explained: “One leader isn't telling you something different or having a different vision or idea than the other. They work together”. Another middle leader commented that the SLT spoke the same language: “It's not unusual for me to hear a half-sentence that the other person seems to understand. They seem quite to understand each other well”.

4.2.3.5 Support, Development and Availability for Middle Leaders and Other Stakeholders. Several middle leaders felt that the SLT was functioning well when they were available to support and develop middle leaders in their roles. Often this support took the form of SLT members consulting, listening, encouraging and mentoring middle leaders. For example, one middle leader commented: “Every [SLT] member has their door open all the time...And it seems whenever you need to go in there that you're the most important in the room at that point in time”. One middle leader commented: “When they're at their best...I feel valued, I feel supported, and I also feel like I'm working in partnership. That's when I feel like it's at its best”. Another middle leader observed that they have “always felt genuinely heard from any of the Executive...You're genuinely heard by them. And I think that is really important”. One middle leader described being listened to by the SLT as an engaging experience: “It feels I'm the only person they're interested in hearing from.”

They're not distracted. They're not making notes...And if you're at the door, very rarely am I turned away".

Several middle leaders indicated that the SLT was working well when the SLT developed other leaders, especially middle leaders. One middle leader observed: "So, when you need help with decision making or maybe you've come into a situation that you've never dealt with before, and you can work with them to come up with a solution [that's] when they're at their best". Another middle leader felt the SLT were at their best when the SLT worked together with middle leaders as if they were all one team: "I don't ever feel like it's a hierarchical thing. It's everybody working together for the common good...as a leadership team, they definitely step up and take you along".

Some middle leaders considered the availability of the SLT to multiple stakeholders –middle leaders, students, and parents – as an indicator of their efficacy. For example, one middle leader commented the SLT was "at their best when they are...interacting with the kids or parents". Similarly, another middle leader observed that the SLTs were effective when they were "present with the staff, in the staff room, and with the student body as well".

4.3 Summary

Table 4.2 provides a summary of the characteristics that enhance the effective functioning of the SLT.

Table 4.2
Principal, SLT Member and Middle Leader Perceptions of the Characteristics Supporting the Effective Functioning of SLTs

Characteristic	Principal	SLT member	Middle leader
Positive relationships	Trust, frequent positive contact with SLT members, humour, care for each other	Trust, shared values, care, humour, forgiveness, respect, and support, socialising	Friendly, tight-knit
Shared leadership	Sharing the load, doing tasks together	Sharing the load, sharing a leadership vision, taking on your own portfolio, helping team members	Multiple leaders, portfolios of work, coordinated effort
Emotional intelligence	Calm, mindful, self-regulated, present, perspective	Calm and self-regulated	Relaxed, present, available, harmonious
Prioritising vision and strategy	Future-focused, strategic, less operational		
Effective communication	Humour, providing feedback straightforward	Honest, frequent communication, cooperative	Open, transparent, frequent, aligned
Positive SLT Response to COVID-19		Single focus, purposeful work, collaboration, frequent meetings, support, morale, and energy	
An improvement mindset		Preparedness to grow, improve, reflect on practice; open to change and feedback	
Support, development and availability for middle leaders and other stakeholders	Available to SLT members	Available to SLT members	Listened to, supported, encouraged, involved, respected, coached and mentored

Specific Research Question 2

What Characteristics do Principals, SLT Members, and Middle Leaders Perceive as Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of the SLT in High-performing CCSS?

4.4 Characteristics Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive as Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of the SLT in High-performing CCSS

This section reports on the perceptions of principals, SLT members, and middle leaders regarding research sub-question 2: What characteristics do Principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS? Principal perceptions will be outlined first, followed by SLT members and middle leaders.

4.4.1 Principal Perceptions of the Characteristics Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of the SLT

The principals perceived three characteristics that inhibited the SLT. These characteristics were excessive workload, interpersonal strain and inadequate monitoring of SLT performance.

4.4.1.1 Excessive Workload. The principals highlighted that excessive workload inhibited the SLT from functioning at its best. For one principal, excessive workloads such as “back-to-back meetings” prevented quality interactions within the SLT. Another principal commented that the SLT was less effective when SLT members were “busy, agitated, tired and frustrated”. One principal commented that the team performed less well when “overloaded”. Busyness sometimes inhibited the strategic thinking that made the SLT more effective. As one principal reflected: “Yesterday we got stuck talking [about] graffiti in the toilets...And you just think, hang on, guys, when we're not functioning well, we're focusing too much on those little things and not letting others do their job”.

All three principals felt the SLT was not at its best when it got stuck on operational issues and struggled to work on issues to do with vision and strategy. One principal noted that “there are impositions on me now that compliance and risk and staffing and all these sorts of things that maybe we need more personnel to deal with”. Another principal said they would hire more administrative staff to address

their ongoing involvement in human resources work. This principal commented: “to have a HR person that's highly qualified and highly skilled would change our lives”. Another principal intended to restructure the SLT to enable the team to focus more on strategic issues. All principals expressed frustration that they, and their SLT, were weighed down by operational and administrative duties that could be attributed to an excessive workload. As a result of administrative pressure, principals regretted not being able to be more visionary.

4.4.1.2 Interpersonal Strain. One principal highlighted a concern over interpersonal strain - that is, tension between members of the SLT. Specifically, this principal felt that the negative behaviour of an SLT member inhibited the SLT’s effectiveness. The team member was described as a “distraction” and “making the team not function”. The team member was described as a "detractor, that takes more energy". They could "bring tension to the surface". This principal singled out dominance in meetings as an example of behaviour inhibiting SLT effectiveness. They commented: “every time something slightly different or new is suggested, it doesn't mean that you have to keep submitting an opinion...It frustrates the team”. This principal felt the behaviour of one SLT member prevented the team from being more effective.

4.4.1.3 Inadequate Monitoring of SLT effectiveness. All principals agreed that the SLT could be more effective if the team formally evaluated its performance. However, one principal commented that they did not have a way to measure the SLT’s effectiveness:

I don't think we do that well at all. As a team, I would struggle to give you an example of something that's concrete...[to] give us some feedback on the ELT. We [give] feedback to individuals. They have their reviews...But that's not the team.

This principal continued: “So I think that's a weakness. If we want to call it that. There's an absence of assessing the team and how it would be judged. Another principal commented on the absence of feedback for the SLT: “That's certainly an area that we could be doing some more work in”. One principal said they were unsure of how they might measure the effectiveness of the SLT. They reflected: “I don't think we've chosen anything...We don't evaluate it. Then sit back and say, you

know what, guys, we're off the mark here because we've dropped six of the eight things that we wanted to do". This principal went on to say that just because "no one's complaining", doesn't mean they are doing well. They recognised that the SLT needed to collect feedback. All principals recognised the SLT could be more effective if they developed a way to evaluate the SLTs effectiveness.

4.4.2 SLT Perceptions of the Characteristics Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of the SLT

SLT members perceived three characteristics that inhibited the effective functioning of the SLT. These characteristics were an excessive workload, poor communication, interpersonal strain and inadequate monitoring of SLT effectiveness.

4.4.2.1 Excessive Workload. Several SLT members felt that the excessive workload inhibited the SLT from functioning effectively. One SLT member commented: "When the team's not at its best...there's always times when certain members are under the pump and show signs of stress". Another SLT commented that the workload was intense. They cited an example of a colleague who often worked six days of the week: "He's here probably nearly every Saturday. My day yesterday was twelve and a half hours. I'm not an anomaly; I know that I'm the norm". This SLT member went on to say: "The amount of time that leaders devote to their work is something that Cath Ed probably can't solve unless there's a lot more money [given to schools for staffing]". Another SLT member commented, "you can see people are overworked; they're stressed. They're working long hours... Sometimes we just stop, and we just sit there, and we go, okay, what are we going to do...So and so is frazzled; this is not working". Similarly, another SLT member commented: "We are so busy, we are still run off our feet, even with eight people around". Another remarked: "The frustration is...we're time-poor, and we probably have got too much on". Finally, one SLT member said, "I've got enough on my plate. I can't do it anymore. Please don't give me any more to deal with".

Several SLT members recognised that their commitment to the SLT had a high personal cost outside the school environment. One member commented that they felt "a massive hypocrite because [they] stand up all the time and talk about wellbeing and work-life balance...and I haven't exercised properly in probably twelve months because I just don't have the time. For me, it's a trade-off between

sleep or exercise”. Another SLT member commented that handling the workload "without burning out" was challenging because "it's just so intense". One SLT member commented that the busyness of the SLT prevented them from aspiring to principalship: "We just keep pushing up and up and up, and there's got to be a point where it becomes too much...it is actually preventing me from wanting to pursue being a principal".

Several SLT members recognised that the excessive workload prevented them from being “strategic” or developing other leaders. For example, one SLT member commented that when the team is rushed, they make “decisions on the hop, which is not what we want to do. We want to have a bit of time to let us think about a thing, even if it's just a couple of hours”. In addition, the experience of excessive workload could contribute other factors that made the SLT less effective, such as poor communication.

4.4.2.2 Poor Communication. Some SLT members identified poor communication as an inhibitor of the SLT. For example, one SLT member commented: “I think when the team is not at its best, discussions are quite blunt, and there's probably a lot more behind-the-scenes sidebar conversations going on”. Several SLT members noted other forms of poor communication that inhibited the effectiveness of the SLT. These included being unclear about expectations, not sharing information efficiently, and not communicating as a unified front. One SLT member commented: “I've spoken up a few times at [SLT] meetings to say [to the principal] you want us to all say the same thing. You want us to go out as the united front, but if we're finding out stuff at the same time as the rest of the staff [we can't be a united front]”. Another SLT member commented: “If we come to ELT and decisions have been made that we're not even aware of and they just come at the last minute. Sometimes I feel left out of that decision-making -process”. One SLT member commented that if the SLT is not on the same page, it is like a child witnessing “mum and dad fighting”. They said it is essential to present a united front to middle leaders.

4.4.2.3 Interpersonal Strain. Several SLT members noted the SLT could be inhibited by interpersonal strain. One SLT member described the impact of a period when the SLT experienced sustained tension. They commented: "There was some

distrust between people in the SLT... People were, I know I was, personally taking themselves away from the meetings...If it was a social event, we'd never come to a social event". This SLT member recalled SLT members "alienating" themselves from the group and "doing their job on the outer". When there was tension between SLT members, other team members stopped contributing to the team. Another SLT member commented that interpersonal strain could lead to SLT members withdrawing from group discussions. They said: "You'll have eight people not squabbling, but it's pistols at dawn...when that happens, we aren't productive from a team perspective". One SLT commented on the impact of tension within the SLT and the importance of nurturing a safe team environment: "I think when we are running really well, I feel safe enough, quite vocal, in my opinion. I think sometimes when there is a bit of a disconnect, I don't feel safe enough. And I also don't want to offend people".

For some SLT members, the interpersonal strain was experienced as a "personality clash". Personality clashes prevented the team from being effective. One SLT member commented: "I guess I have to be open and upfront. I actually have a personality conflict with someone in the team. So it's hard for me, which I'm trying to manage with the principal and have been for a while". Another SLT commented: "There are people here with a personality clash...They're both quite strong and very clear with their views". They said they wished they could resolve the clash: "I would love to just bring out the elephant in the room and go, what is it? And how do we fix this?". Several SLT members highlighted that tension between SLT members made the team less effective and withdrawn. One SLT member commented: "There were times when it was strained. Definitely. And for someone like me, who tries and gets on with everyone...I struggled with that".

4.4.2.4 Inadequate Monitoring of SLT Effectiveness. Some SLT members recognised that the SLT did not monitor its performance, which could inhibit its effectiveness. For example, one SLT member commented the evaluation of the SLT effectiveness is "probably something that we could tighten up. And I suppose that becomes the real difference between a school and a corporate organisation". More generally, SLT members did not report a unified way of measuring the SLT. For example, one SLT member commented: "I guess we measure our performance in lots of different ways. So academic success... enrolments. Particularly enrolments, by

word of mouth". One SLT team member said they collect feedback on their performance mostly on negative things: "the number of cranky emails that come in from parents. The number of people who want to challenge us on something that's happened that they're not happy about...It can be quite a negative focus because it becomes no news is good news...We need to improve that". SLT members demonstrated an awareness that the inadequate monitoring of SLT effectiveness could inhibit the SLT's efficacy.

4.4.3 Middle Leader Perceptions of the Characteristics Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of the SLT

Middle leaders identified four factors that inhibited the effectiveness of the SLT. These were the excessive workload of the SLT, poor communication, especially under stress, a lack of availability to middle leaders and interpersonal strain.

4.4.3.1 Excessive Workload. Middle leaders recognised that the excessive workload associated with senior leadership inhibited the SLT's effectiveness. As one middle leader commented: "I think sometimes [there is] just too much going on [in] a school of this size". One middle leader shared a pertinent example of excessive SLT workload: "The boss once said... he came to work and there were 10,000 emails in his inbox. And that's nuts. No one can deal with that". They went on to say: "That level of communication is impossible to deal with. And then given the fact that you've got your job to do, there's no way you can go back and...attack all of that [work]". Several middle leaders noted that busyness prevented the SLT from engaging in visionary thinking. One middle leader commented: "[It] would be better to see them working on big picture things that are going to change the fabric of school rather than sort of administrative tasks that could be done quite easily". Another middle leader observed that when SLT members were busy, they were not available as sounding boards or decision makers to middle leaders: "You can tell by the body language sometimes, that things aren't going so well, or the type of voice...there's a retreat almost, during very stressful times... But I think, in leadership, we have to be courageous and overcome that".

4.4.3.2 Poor Communication Under Stress. Some middle leaders felt that the excessive workload and stress associated with senior leadership harmed the

SLT's ability to communicate clearly and build quality relationships. One middle leader reflected: "When the team's not working well in terms of their relations to staff... when they're under stress, they default to an unprofessional manner of conduct with staff". One middle leader noted that "With that stress... comes very short, sharp communication". Another middle leader observed that SLT members stopped communicating when stressed and developed a "bunker mentality". Some middle leaders felt the SLT was less effective when they disagreed over specific issues and conveyed mixed messages. On this point, one middle leader described feeling "Lost because then you go, okay, well, I'm not clear now on what we're trying to achieve here". Several middle leaders commented that they would deliberately avoid SLT members if they knew they were busy or stressed.

4.4.3.3 Lack of Availability to Middle Leaders. Some middle leaders linked the excessive workload of SLT members with a perceived lack of availability to middle leaders. As one middle leader noted: "Schools are just busy places to start with. But that can be a thing. A sense of frustration when you're expecting some sort of response and it takes longer than what it would, or you have to then follow back up". Another middle leader remarked: "I know one of the people in my department...has emailed someone [in the SLT] three times and hasn't got a response". Some middle leaders criticised the SLT for being invisible to staff and students. One middle leader commented that it was essential for the SLT to have a "handle on what's actually going on at the coal face". They argued that "It's all very well planning and master plans and making edicts and all the rest of it. But if you're not in touch with what's actually happening on the ground, then you're actually losing the plot". They saw the availability and visibility of the principals as important: "How can you know what you don't know if you're not out there at some stage and having a good look and connecting with the people who are out there? I think the kids really value it too". One middle leader described seeing SLT members in their part of the school as rare as "a sighting of the Yeti". This middle leader commented: "Certainly they are time-poor. But, so are staff". Several middle leaders felt the SLT was less effective when they were not connected to students and teachers in the classroom. One middle leader commented: "We don't see the top three [leaders] out in the yard a lot at all. And sometimes we feel like they've lost touch with what is

going on out there in our classrooms". Many middle leaders felt the SLT was more effective when engaging with middle leadership, other staff, and students.

4.4.3.4 Interpersonal Strain. Some middle leaders felt that a challenging member of the SLT could prevent the SLT from being effective. For example, one middle leader provided the example of an awkward SLT member where: "Everyone is too afraid to speak. When you do speak, you get shut down". In this case, the middle leader felt that the challenging SLT member prevented the SLT from working on big-picture issues. This SLT member was not seen as technically incompetent; the SLT member was considered challenging because of their interpersonal conflict with other SLT team members.

4.5 Summary

Table 4.3 provides a summary of the characteristics which principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing CCSS.

Table 4.3

The Characteristics Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive as Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of the SLT

	Principal	SLT member	Middle leader
Excessive workload	Busy, tired, operational focus, lack of administrative support	Overwhelmed, unavailable to stakeholders, siloed thinking, stress, poor communication	Busyness, email overload, too many tasks to complete
Poor communication		Unclear, not sharing, lacking transparency, disunity	Unavailable, abrupt and rude, communicating different messages
Lack of availability to middle leaders			Unavailable to middle leaders, withdraws, not available for discussion or support
Interpersonal strain	Disruptive to the team, frustrating, damages meetings	Unresolved issues, personality clashes	Creating tension, personality clashes

Specific Research Question 3

What Resources or Professional Learning do Principals, SLT members and Middle Leaders Perceive Will Support the Development of SLTs?

4.6 Resources or Professional Learning Principals, SLT members and Middle Leaders Perceive Will Support the Development of SLTs

This section reports on the perceptions of principals, SLT members and middle leaders regarding research sub-question 3: What resources or professional learning do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs? Principal perceptions will be outlined first, followed by SLT members and middle leaders.

4.6.1 Principal Perceptions of Resources of Professional Learning that Will Support the Development of SLTs

All principals indicated that the SLT engaged in regular individual professional learning and had access to resources supporting their growth. However, principals recognised that they did not engage in substantial professional learning that specifically developed their SLT as a team. One principal commented, "More of our focus has been around individuals. I think we could certainly do with some more on the team". Another principal said: "We do professional learning as a team...[but] what we probably haven't done... is taken ourselves as a specialist separate group and gone, okay, we're all going for two days to listen to so and so". All principals were keen to develop their teams but felt they had limited opportunities. For example, one principal commented: "So now I think bringing the whole team together and developing all our skills as a team could actually take us to a whole new level. We probably haven't done enough in that space". Another principal saw great value in developing the SLT through spiritual retreats. They commented: "Going away on this retreat was really good because it was us as a group. And perhaps that's what we need to do as well, and maybe that is a failing on my part".

All principals felt that a centralised organisation like CEWA could support professional learning by offering high-quality professional development that enhances the functionality of the SLT and also helps individual SLT members improve in their specific roles. One principal saw merit in their SLT members working with like-minded peers from other SLTs. They commented, "The best PD I

ever had was a group of four of us, and we'd meet once a term for coffee offsite, no agenda. We'd come, and we would talk flat out for three hours, and you'd go away just thinking about all these ideas". Another principal observed that it would be helpful to develop SLT members "in a team context". One principal mentioned that there was an opportunity to embed SLT effectiveness training in the existing induction process for principals run by CEWA. All principals saw value in bringing their SLTs together to teach them leadership skills that would create "cohesion" and "awareness" in the SLT.

4.6.2 SLT Perceptions of Resources or Professional Learning that Will Support the Development of SLTs

Many SLT members recognised that, as individuals, they had access to substantial professional learning and other resources; but fewer opportunities to develop as a whole team. For example, one SLT member noted that they engaged in "individual reviews in leadership and so forth, but nothing where we've been sat down and said, right, this is how you become a better team". Several SLT participants thought they would benefit if they had access to resources or professional learning that improved their specific performance in their role. SLT members noted a broad range of topics that might improve their performance which included: mentoring, emotional intelligence, mental health, wellbeing, compliance, stewardship, modern-day slavery, legal, finance, business, Accreditation for Religious Education, timetabling, data analysis, data management, crisis management, gender dysphoria and emotional coping skills.

Many SLT members believed that CEWA was in a "unique position" to share best practices from other SLTs. Some SLT members felt CEWA needed to facilitate "credible" and engaging professional development to support teams. One SLT member encouraged CEWA to use high-quality external presenters: "I would actually look at them... getting external people in rather than running it through CEWA...I sometimes think it [CEWA provided professional development] doesn't hit the mark". Several SLT members believed CEWA could provide a role in developing networks of experts to support these areas. For example, one SLT member said:

I produce a Board Report for our Advisory Board on a monthly basis, and I provide a budget for the next year's reports of that budget. But I'm sure it'd be

good to get together and [see what] Catholic Ed would say is best practice for reporting. [CEWA might provide] a template for a board report, a template for a budget, and maybe conduct a couple of workshops where we come together and maybe populate those templates and then throw them up on the screen and compare them.

Most SLT members agreed the CEWA had a role to play in supporting SLTs with professional learning.

Many SLT members recognised that development programs such as spiritual retreats brought the SLT together and created “bonding” experiences. One SLT member commented that the “whole retreat experience was a really good experience about us coming together and being able to talk openly and honestly with each other”. Other SLT members valued the insights discovered in personality assessments that allowed them to make sense of their place, the team, and other team members' personalities. For example, one SLT member commented, “So if we all had a chance to do something like that, or the DISC or whatever, just to learn more about yourself, that self-understanding”. One SLT recommended that CEWA offer professional learning that took SLT members “away from our schools for a couple of days” and provided professional learning that met both team and individual needs.

4.6.3 Middle Leader Perceptions of Resources or Professional Learning that Will Support the Development of SLTs

Middle leaders did not present a clear consensus on the professional learning needs of the SLT. However, some middle leaders felt the SLT could engage in professional development to work more effectively as a team and as individuals. One middle leader wanted to see individual SLT members look at their roles because “they're not all doing the best that they can in their role”. Another commented: “I think it does need to be a team thing, because all team members need to take responsibility for [the team working effectively]”. Several middle leaders recognised that spiritual retreats were valuable professional development for the SLT. One middle leader commented: “Almost like a retreat, I think, would be fabulous, where you get the team away for a weekend or something, and you're able to have those really open discussions or a series of reflection days or something”. One middle leader said that the Leaders Forums, an event for leaders run by CEWA, provided

meaningful opportunities “to hear about best practice”. This middle leader recognised the value of networking and sharing information between school leaders.

Several middle leaders felt that SLT members needed specific role-based training. For instance, some middle leaders felt that SLT members would benefit from leadership training that developed management skills focused on emotional intelligence and difficult conversations. One middle leader commented on the absence of leadership skills in the SLT. They said: "There are teachers who are put into management positions with no expertise...So I think they need that sort of PD". Another middle leader commented that SLTs would benefit from following up on the feedback from formal reviews. Similarly, one middle leader stressed developing coaching capability to enhance improvement. They reflected: "No one's really getting any honest feedback from people in order to improve".

One middle leader commented that SLT members would benefit from developing their skills and knowledge in “faith formation”, “tough conversations”, gender dysphoria, and “manner of life issues”. Some middle leaders pointed out the value of attending professional development on “goal setting” and “personality”. Another middle leader saw value in shadowing other executive teams. They commented: "if CEWA made space for [the SLT] to go and spend time in other schools, with Senior Executive Leadership Teams, that would be valuable". Middle leaders were keen to see the SLT grow and develop as individuals and as a team.

4.7 Summary

Table 4.4 provides a summary of the resources or professional learning that principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs.

Table 4.4
Resources or Professional Learning Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive Will Support the Development of SLTs

	Principal	SLT member	Middle leaders
Team professional learning	Retreats, team development, coaching skills, a focus on vision	Retreats, Team development	Retreats, Team development, understanding personalities and team dynamics
Individual Leadership development	Coaching skills	Role-specific training, personality	Emotional intelligence, effective communication, performance reviews, faith formation, personality, the business of schooling
Networking	Work with peers with similar experience	Network with other CEWA leaders in similar roles	Leaders Forum, shadow other SLTs
Quality professional learning facilitated by CEWA	Credible high-quality presenters	Credible presenters, high quality adult learning principles	Evidence-based best practice professional learning

Specific Research Question Four

How Do Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive the Principal's Role in the SLT?

4.8 Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders' Perceptions of the Principal's Role in the SLT?

This section reports on the perceptions of principals, SLT members, and middle leaders regarding research sub-question four: How do principals, SLT

members and middle leaders perceive the principal's role in the SLT? Principal perceptions will be outlined first, followed by SLT members and middle leaders.

4.8.1 Principal Perceptions of The Principal's Role in the SLT

All three principals perceived the role of the principal as complex and multi-faceted. When thinking specifically about their role in the SLT, principals tended to perceive themselves as leadership coaches, visionaries, team builders and peacekeepers.

4.8.1.1 Leadership Coach. All three principals described their role in the SLT as being similar to an executive leadership coach. An executive leadership coach helps leaders reach their potential through encouragement, active listening, feedback, and clarity-seeking (Campbell and Nieuwerburgh, 2018). For example, one principal talked about the importance of empowering SLT members. They said:

I'm always [saying], come to me with a problem, but bring me some solutions because I want you to work through it, and then I'll just sort of tick off on it. Say, yes, that's great. We'll give some ways to modify or improve it. But I think that's really important.

This principal liked to “celebrate [, and] acknowledge people as well...for work that they've done... so that people do feel valued, that they give their heart and soul to the job”. A second principal described themselves as a “voice of experience” who affirmed their leadership team: “I'll say, well...that's fantastic. Yeah, I think you're right. I think that's the right decision to make...Sometimes it's a sounding board, and therefore you're enabling still, and you're supporting”. They explained that they liked to involve SLT members in decision-making.

I'm not comfortable with telling people, we must, you must. I'm not comfortable with that. I'm much more comfortable being around a table with a group, listening to people, intelligent, professional people, put forward an opinion or evidence counter to what I think. But having that dialogue and knowing it's been accepted by everyone else around the table and as one person's input, we thrash that out. We talk about it. We end up with a certain position and everyone smiles, and it's great. It comes back to that element of team.

This principal explained that part of their role was helping people contribute their opinions to group discussions. They commented: "When you're talking about an issue around the table, deliberating about something different, people will have input. I'll elicit that". In each case described above, the principals described a strong coaching element in their role. They sought to develop and grow members of the SLT through encouraging and clarifying conversations.

4.8.1.2 Visionary. All principals agreed that they had the role of bringing the school's vision to life. One principal identified their role as "quite big-picture, strategic directions. I oversee them, the vision and mission. It doesn't mean it's for me to make up, but I need to oversee them. I need to drive that". Another principal described their role as "steering the ship or the bus...I need to do more of the strategic directions, where we're going, that sort of thing, and then [the SLT] help with the implementation of that". Another principal mentioned that their job was to keep the SLT focused on the "big picture" when meetings became too focused on "nuts and bolts" and "small fry" issues. One principal commented further that their role was to share the vision and "make sure that that's at the strategic level. So just continuing to get people to come back to our strategic plan, to be focusing in those meetings on that". All principals recognised that being visionary was a crucial part of their role.

4.8.1.3 Team Builder. All principals felt it was their responsibility to build the SLT. One principal described how they started this process by selecting the team. They mentioned that they had "appointed all of [the team] bar one. I think it's about not appointing people the same as you as well, having some diversity in the team". This principal noted that they actively connected with their team through "regular conversations...every day". Similarly, another principal felt that their role was to "gel" the SLT and a "keep them in their lane... keep them at a distance [so team members] don't overreach". Another principal commented that their role was to make "Sure that the Executive team functions well together...because if I do that, then I'm taking care of the rest". Finally, one principal believed the principal's job is to "lead" the team's culture. They commented that the principal has to be "The person that breaks the ice and cracks a joke...You have to guide that, to enable that...You can't sit around the table and say, okay, one of you needs to crack a joke now. It doesn't

work...It's got to be spontaneous". All principals acknowledged that they had an active role in building the SLT.

4.8.1.4 The Peacekeeper. All principals indicated that they played a role in stabilising the emotions of the SLT and the school. One principal reflected that they played a role in calming people down and showing them a different view of reality. They commented that "in some pretty stressful situations...Sometimes it does need a little bit of, hey guys, relax, when one or two voices are starting to sound a little panic-stricken...and that's where I think my job is fundamental". Similarly, another principal conceptualised themselves as a self-regulating "barometer" of the school: "We had a couple of critical incidents early [on]...that reminded me that I have to really keep a lid on [my emotions], show control, be vulnerable, but show control, be human, but not overstate things". This principal argued that if they didn't show a strong sense of self-regulation, "people will absorb" negative emotions. One principal explained that they played a role in creating positive perspectives for the SLT. They recalled reminding the SLT "to be grateful," that "we are okay" and that things "will all work out and things happen for a reason and all these sorts of things to remind us and keep us level". Another principal noted that they play a constructive role in resolving tension and conflict. They commented that "Often they'll come to me and I will talk through with them what they think they could do...it's also about helping them to have the confidence and I guess some of the language...to try and resolve that conflict themselves". This principal went on to describe the importance of backing your SLT: "If there's an issue, then you'll be right beside them to resolve it, or to speak to the parent because I want them to know that they've got my backing". Collectively, the three principals indicated they play an important role as peacekeepers in the SLT.

4.8.2 *SLT Perceptions of The Principal's Role in the SLT*

Data from SLT participants indicated five ways in which the SLT perceived the principal's role. These roles are leadership coach, team builder, visionary, peacekeeper and faith leader.

4.8.2.1 Leadership Coach. Many SLT members perceived the principal to be behaving like a leadership coach. One SLT commented, "Anytime I can go to [the principal], they'll never say no. They'll listen, and they might not always have the

answers, and sometimes we problem solve it together". Several SLT members commented that the principal had an "open door" policy and was always willing to listen. One SLT member "I just pop in as I need". Another SLT member said the principal's role was "to support" them. One SLT member described the principal as a "sounding board, to listen, to be able to make decisions. More importantly, to be open to discuss things". Some SLT members saw the principal's role as an enabler and empowerer. One SLT remarked: "And they just say, here's all the NAPLAN stuff. Go and sort your NAPLAN out...don't hassle me with it...go off and do your job". Most SLT members conceptualised the principal as a supportive leadership coach.

4.8.2.2 Visionary. Several SLT members saw the principal's role as a visionary. One SLT member said the principal is "the vision... the combined vision". Another SLT member described the principal as the "DNA" of the school. One SLT member commented that the principal's role was to identify "The bigger picture actions that need to be actioned, and then delegating them out to us as [they] bring us along on the journey". One SLT member described the principal as omnipotent and omnipresent. They said that the principal oversees everything but also has their finger on the pulse. This SLT member described the principal "as like the catalogue and we're [SLT members are] the chapters. They've got the summary...the overview. They've got the executive summary, and we've got the text". Another SLT member noted, "The principal's role is to guide us. They are leading the ship, so they provide the direction and guide us". Another SLT member said: "The principal's role is really to...bring the focus back to the vision and the mission. That's really what they're about".

Many SLT members used visionary metaphors to describe the principal's role in the SLT. Some saw the principal as focusing on the "big picture" or being the "CEO of the organisation" or "captain" of the ship. One SLT member commented: "I still think the principal needs to be across all areas, obviously, because ultimately the buck stops with them". Another SLT member said the principal "Oversees what's going on".

4.8.2.3 Team Builder. Several SLT members perceived the principal's role as a team builder. One SLT explained that "There is no more important job in a

school than the principal, in terms of setting the culture and empowering good people around to be at their best, because the principal can't be everything". They went on to explain the importance of the principal acting as a teambuilder: "The principal needs to be a great empowerer in their team, and they need to be recognising strengths...They can help mitigate areas of deficiency in people without destroying their genius". One SLT member said, "The sign of a great principal is to have a great team underneath [them]". Some SLT members contended that the SLT was effective when the principal actively selected SLT members. As one SLT member put it: "I think that comes back down to the strength of the principal...to see what is needed for their team". Another SLT member said: "I think [the principal] had a big hand in selecting me. So [the principal] obviously saw in me someone who would provide support". One SLT member commented: "It's the people chosen in the roles that have been chosen well". Another SLT member remarked, "You get the right people in the right spots, monitor quietly. Some of it is formal, a lot of it is informal monitoring, and let them go". One SLT member reflected: "So the principal needs to be a great empowerer in their team, and they need to be recognising strengths. Everyone can play from their strengths first, recognising and empowering people to be at their best". Similarly, an SLT member described the principal as the steward of the team: "Ensuring that all portfolios are seen and heard and really having that oversight that we all play well together". SLT members recognised that the principal acted in the role of a team builder.

4.8.2.4 The Peacekeeper. SLT members saw the principal as the peacekeeper of the SLT. As one SLT member commented: "I think the principal has an overriding calming effect. If you just notice that tension builds, the principal can diffuse the situation". Another SLT member said: "If there's tension or if there's unrest, we'll turn to the principal and [they are] a good leader...Because [they'll] deal with it there and then". Another reflected: "I think [the principal] just sort of brings it to a head...and probably comes back and says what's best for the school, what's best for the students". Finally, one SLT member commented that "The primary...thing that a principal needs to offer is a sense of optimism and hope and potential and also care and support". Many SLT members recognised the principal played a crucial role in keeping the peace and providing emotional stability to the SLT.

4.8.2.5 Faith Leader. Several SLT members saw the principal as the faith leader of both the SLT and the school. One SLT member commented: “They are the ultimate role model in the school. The way the principal treats other people is what flows down to how other people treat each other as well”. Another SLT member said: “The principal is the first one to say...we are unashamedly a Catholic school, and these are the values that we need to articulate and to follow”. One SLT observed that the principal was “a Eucharistic Minister [and] regularly attends Mass and models those kinds of ways that we should be modelling our faith for the students”. Another SLT reflected: “I think our principal has to be seen very clearly as the chief pastor, the chief advocate for our mission, and then empower those that can do the work...[they need to] be seen as being an active, willing, trusting participant in all aspects of the faith”. One SLT member explained that the role of the principal as a faith leader could be understood by “the principal’s everyday interactions”. Another SLT member noted the importance of the principal’s faith leadership: “They are very confident to be and very public in...putting everything through a Gospel lens....They feel very uncomfortable when we stray away from that, and they will bring us back”. All SLT members recognised that the principal was the faith leader of the SLT and the school.

4.8.3 Middle Leader Perceptions of the Principal’s Role in the SLT

Middle leaders perceived the principal’s role in the SLT to be like a coach, visionary, peacekeeper and team builder. For example, one middle leader described the principal as a supportive coach or mentor. They commented: “If I think about our pastoral care maintenance, [they] will often sit and just listen...And [they] will actually try to get a feel and get all the information”. Another middle leader said: “The principal is certainly the leader of the ELT, and it's very visible. You see all of the ELT approach the principal for advice. That's unquestionable”. Several middle leaders felt the principal’s role in the SLT was to “Drive the vision and empower the people in their team to make decisions that will support that vision”. One middle leader observed: “I think part of driving the vision is sharing that vision beyond the executive, sharing that vision with the staff”. Some middle leaders recognised that the principal’s role was to build the team. One middle leader commented: “I think the principal [has to] bring their team together and go, look, that wasn't good enough”. Several middle leaders saw the principal as a peacekeeper. For example, one middle

leader described the principal as “that calm face, I think, in the storm...And I would agree about setting that culture of trust and collegiality. I think others start with seeing that... I think just that open door, [that] willingness to listen”.

4.9 Summary

Table 4.5 provides a summary of the principal, SLT members and middle leader perceptions of the principal’s role in the SLT.

Table 4.5
Summary of Principal, SLT members and Middle Leader Perceptions of the Principal’s Role in the SLT.

	Principal	SLT member	Middle leaders
Leadership coach	Coach, listener, provide feedback, clarity seeking, seeks solutions, celebrates strengths, sounding board, heart and soul, voice of experience, dialogues, supports, empowers	Available, listens, solve problems, open door, sounding board, empowering	Sits and listen, gets a feel, collects information, open door willingness to listen
Visionary	Visionary strategic directions, big picture, captain, director	The vision, DNA, bigger picture, guide, mission, captain, driver, accountable oversees	Drive, vision, share vision empower others
Team builder	Select, appoint, diversity, regular conversations, gel, keep them in their lane, function well, take care, lead culture, crack a joke	Great team underneath, selected members, support, chose, right people, right spots, monitor, recognise strengths, empower, stewards, oversight, play well together	Bring the team together
Peacekeeper	Stabilise, barometer, manage, regulate, relax, generative positive perspective, resolve tension, support. the SLT	Calming effect, resolve tension, good leader, deal with it, bring it to a head, hope, optimism, care, support	Calm face in a storm
Faith leader		Role model, eucharistic minister, attend Mass, chief pastor, chief advocate for mission, trusting participant, bring us back, Gospel lens	Setting that culture of trust and collegiality

4.10 Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to present the results of this study. The overarching question of this study is: What are the characteristics of SLTs in high-performing CCSS? The researcher investigated four research sub-questions related to the overarching question. The four sub-questions are listed below:

1. What characteristics do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as supporting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS?
2. What characteristics do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing CCSS?
3. What resources or professional learning do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs?
4. How do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive the principal's role in the SLT?

A comparative summary of these perceptions of the principals, SLT members and middle with regards to the four research questions in high-performing CCSS is described in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6

A Comparison of the Perceptions of Middle Leaders with the Perceptions of the Principal and SLT Members in High-performing CCSS

	Characteristics that enhance the SLT	Characteristics that inhibit the SLT	Resources that support the development of the SLT	The principal's role in the SLT
Principals	Positive relationships, shared leadership, emotional stability, prioritising vision and strategy	Excessive workload, interpersonal strain, problematic team member, lack of administrative support, absence of team performance, evaluation	Retreats, team professional development, networking	Leadership coach, team builder, visionary, peacekeeper

	Characteristics that enhance the SLT	Characteristics that inhibit the SLT	Resources that support the development of the SLT	The principal's role in the SLT
Senior leaders	Positive relationships, shared leadership, emotional stability, effective communication, challenging event (COVID-19), improvement mindset	Excessive workload, interpersonal strain, poor communication, absence of team performance evaluation	Team professional development, role focused Professional development, networking, quality professional learning	Leadership coach, team builder, visionary, peacekeeper, faith leader
Middle leaders	Positive relationships, shared leadership, emotional stability, effective communication, availability to middle leaders	Excessive workload, interpersonal strain, poor communication, unavailability to middle leaders, administrivia	Team professional development, individual leadership development	Leadership coach, team builder, visionary, peacekeeper
Aggregated characteristics	Positive relationships, shared leadership, emotional stability, prioritising vision and strategy, effective communication, availability to middle leaders, an improvement mindset, focus as a result of challenging events (COVID-19)	Excessive workload, interpersonal strain, poor communication, unavailability to middle leaders, administrivia, lack of administrative support	Team professional learning, retreats, role-focused professional development, individual leadership development, networking, quality professional learning	Leadership coach, team builder, visionary, peacekeeper, faith leader

The data in Table 4.6 indicates that principals, SLT members and middle leaders share many similar views about what makes an effective SLT and some minor differences. The next chapter discusses the implications of these results.

Chapter 5

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This research explored the characteristics of senior leadership teams (SLTs) in three metropolitan high-performing Catholic Education Western Australia composite and secondary schools (CCSS) in Perth. The previous chapter outlined the research results. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the results. The overarching research question was: What are the characteristics of SLTs in high-performing CCSS? The four sub-questions listed below address the overarching research question:

1. What characteristics do principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive as supporting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS?
2. What characteristics do principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing CCSS?
3. What resources or professional learning do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs?
4. How do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive the principal's role in the SLT?

The four research sub-questions provide the structure for this chapter outlined in Table 5.1.

The researcher collected the data for this research through semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, document searches, and researcher field notes. Miles et al's. (2020) analytical research methods inform the researcher's approach to the Discussion. Miles et al. (2020) encouraged researchers to note themes and patterns in research data and then compare those themes and patterns to a formalised body of work, such as a literature review. In the case of this chapter, themes and patterns that emerge from the Discussion are compared with insights provided from Chapter 2: The Literature Review, as well as the researcher's field notes. Finally, the researcher will discuss the results from the perspective of the three research participant groups: principals, SLT members and middle leaders.

Table 5.1
Outline of Chapter Five: Discussion of the Research Results

5.1	Introduction
5.2	The characteristics principals, SLT members, and middle Leaders perceive support the effective functioning of the SLT
5.3	Summary
5.4	The characteristics principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLT
5.5	Summary
5.6	Resources or professional learning principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs
5.7	Summary
5.8	Principals, SLT members and middle leader perceptions of the principal's role in the SLT
5.9	Summary
5.10	Conclusion

5.2 The Characteristics Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive Support the Effective Functioning of the SLT

This section of the discussion examines the perceptions of principals, SLT members, and middle leaders regarding research sub-question one: What characteristics do principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive support the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS? The section begins with a discussion of principal perceptions. It will then examine SLT and middle leader perceptions. Finally, the researcher will compare the perceptions of principals, SLT members, and middle leaders with insights from Chapter Two: The Literature Review. The Discussion will also introduce the researcher's field notes which will be compared and synthesised with insights from both study participants and the Literature Review.

5.2.1 *The Characteristics Principals Perceive Support the Effective Functioning of the SLT*

The principals in this study reported that the SLT functioned most effectively when SLT members developed positive relationships, shared in the school's leadership, displayed emotional intelligence and focused on vision and strategy. These themes were consistent with the literature on effective SLTs.

5.2.1.1 Positive Relationships The three principals in this study observed that positive relationships were critical to the effective functioning of the SLT. The principals indicated that positive relationships occurred when team members connected frequently, cared for one another, built trust, and used humour to ease tension in the team. The principals felt positive relationships were further enriched by sharing the practices of a faith tradition (e.g. shared prayer, Mass) and socialising together. Various scholars highlighted that positive relationships were vital to effective SLTs, noting that effective SLTs cultivated team cultures that showed trust and warmth (Bush et al., 2012; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Thomas, 2009). Many scholars described effective SLTs as containing positive relationships where team members were open, trusting, loyal, caring and warm (Bush et al., 2012; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Thomas, 2009). Several scholars described effective SLTs as containing positive relationships where team members were open, trusting, loyal, caring and warm (Shore & Walshaw, 2018; Zappulla, 2003). Strong, positive, collegial relationships enabled SLTs to be honest with each other and address challenging issues both in the team and outside the group (Earley et al., 2004). Observations from the researcher's field notes indicated that positive relationships were more easily maintained when SLT members were located in offices close to each other. This enabled frequent contact. The notion that positive relationships are enriched by accessibility to team members reflected results from the broader literature on management teams. For example, Pentland (2013) observed that productivity and team cohesion increased when management deliberately planned coffee breaks at the same time for team members. Team members who engage in frequent positive social contact seem better able to engage in teamwork (Pentland, 2013). Both principal perceptions and the literature suggested positive relationships were preconditions of an effective SLT (Macklin & Zbar, 2020).

5.2.1.2 Shared Leadership All principals recognised the SLT was more effective when the principal shared their leadership with the SLT. The sharing of leadership could occur in two ways. One, when SLT members took responsibility for a specific portfolio of work. Two, when SLT members pitched in to help fellow team members complete a challenging task. It may have been easy for SLT members to ignore fellow team members' needs and focus solely on their immediate portfolio; however, both principals and the literature on effective teams recognised that

effective teams act interdependently. This interdependence or shared leadership distinguishes effective teams from moderately performing groups (Dalglish & Miller, 2016; Goodall, 2013; Whitmore, 2017). High-performing teams are highly interactive, and team members help other team members to succeed (Katzenbach & Smith, 2013). It would seem that when SLT members were effective, they sensed they were part of a project transcending their portfolios of concern.

Although SLT members helped each other, they also shared leadership by taking responsibility for a specific portfolio of work. In one SLT, the principal published a clear description of the portfolios of SLT members that indicated how each member of the SLT shared in the leadership of the school. Moreover, the principal would allow each SLT member to rotate through the designated portfolios of work roughly every two years. In this way, SLT members could see that they were sharing in the school's leadership and taking responsibility for various aspects of its vision. Various scholars highlighted that effective SLTs share in the school's leadership (Ridden, 1992; Ridden & De Nobile, 2012; Stott & Walker, 1999; Walker, 1994). In the context of COVID-19 in Western Australia, some principals passed on the school's leadership to SLT members while they dealt with the challenges of contact tracing (Hiatt, 2022). Scholars also noted that the SLT shared leadership by sharing the same vision, values and mental models (Bush et al., 2012; Cranston & Ehrich, 2009b; Wallace & Hall, 1994b). Both principals' perceptions and scholarly writing suggest that shared leadership is an essential characteristic of an effective SLT.

5.2.1.3 Emotional Intelligence. All principals felt the SLT was more effective when team members displayed emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996). Emotional intelligence refers to a person's ability to be attuned and responsive to the emotions of others and to regulate one's feelings to achieve constructive outcomes (Passer & Smith, 2021). The principals recognised emotional intelligence helped SLT members to work through complex issues without feeling threatened. Emotionally intelligent SLT members were more able to manage their emotions, maintain sensitivity to other team members, and work on complex and challenging issues. Although the term emotional intelligence was not used explicitly in the educational literature on SLTs, several scholars noted that the characteristics of emotional intelligence were essential to an effective SLT (Cranston & Ehrich, 2009b;

Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Shore & Walshaw, 2018; Zappulla, 2003). Ridden (1992) noted that effective SLT members regulated their feelings and accommodated other SLT members' sentiments. Wallace and Hall (1994) argued that SLT members had to be sensitive to others but frank and open in their communication. Cranston and Ehrich (2009) noted that effective SLT members were clear communicators prepared to resolve disagreements. Some scholars perceived managing one's emotions as a non-negotiable operating norm (Bush et al., 2012; Cranston & Ehrich, 2009a). Both the educational literature on teams and principals' perceptions suggest that emotional intelligence is an important characteristic of an effective SLT.

5.2.1.4 Vision and Strategy. This study found that principals thought their teams were most effective when pursuing the same vision and strategy. Principals perceived the SLT as ineffective when it could not focus on vision and strategy and became distracted by operational problems. Likewise, various scholars believed SLTs were most effective when focusing on vision and strategy (Avenell, 2011, Bush, 2012, Cranston and Ehrich, 2005, Thomas, 2012). Scholars noted that effective SLTs had a clear vision and purpose, and SLT members knew their role in making the vision a reality (Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Ridden, 1992). Macklin and Zbar (2020) found that the most effective SLTs had a clear, unified vision and spoke with one voice. The research results and broader literature suggest that a clear vision and strategy are essential to an effective SLT.

5.2.2 *The Characteristics SLT Members Perceive Support the Effective*

Functioning of the SLT. SLT members agreed with principals that positive relationships, shared leadership, and emotional intelligence contributed to an effective SLT. SLT members also thought effective communication, a mindset for improvement, and challenging events such as the COVID-19 pandemic could enhance the SLT.

5.2.2.1 Positive Relationships. SLT members felt positive relationships were a vital characteristic of an effective SLT. SLT members described positive relationships as occurring when SLT members shared values, trusted and respected each other, cared for each other, and used humour to make light of potential interpersonal tension. Shared values supported positive relationships, such as the SLT's commitment to the Catholic faith. The commitment to the Catholic faith

helped bond the SLT and remind them of their shared beliefs and goals. In addition, some SLTs noted that forgiveness played a role in assisting the SLT in maintaining positive relationships. For some SLT members, non-work socialising cultivated positive relationships in the SLT. The researcher's field notes indicated that social connection outside official work was vital because it helped create team trust.

The insights from SLT members reflected scholars' perceptions that positive relationships were critical to effective SLTs (Abbott & Bush, 2013; Bush et al., 2012; Bush & Glover, 2012; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Thomas, 2009). The literature supported the notion that high positive regard for others, and the capacity to respect team member differences, were critical to SLT effectiveness (Abbott & Bush, 2013; Bush et al., 2012; Bush & Glover, 2012). Scholars did not state explicitly that forgiveness was essential to SLTs; however, they did emphasise similar concepts, such as maintaining loyalty to each other and sharing values (Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Zappulla, 2003). Research external to the work on educational teams has consistently shown that social contact increases group cohesion and productivity (Gratton & Erickson, 2013; Pentland, 2013).

5.2.2.2 Shared Leadership Many SLT members recognised the SLT was most effective when team members shared in the school's leadership. The notion of sharing leadership could occur in a variety of ways. SLT members could share the same vision, values, work tasks and decision-making. Team performance and problem-solving capacity were increased by sharing work tasks and sharing expertise. SLT members perceived sharing the team's leadership positively affected team morale and performance. The literature emphasised that sharing leadership made the SLT more effective. Various scholars noted that sharing in the school's leadership was achieved when the principal enabled SLT members to use their unique skillsets and experience to lead a portfolio of work aligned with the school vision (Bell, 1992, 2002; Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Thomas, 2009; Wallace & Hall, 1994a). The literature also suggests that effective teams can share in the school's leadership more when team members share the same vision, purpose, and values (Abbott & Bush, 2013; Avenell, 2011a, 2011b; Thomas, 2009).

Moreover, the literature demonstrated that a team must share an underlying belief in teamwork (Wallace & Hall, 1994; Cranston & Ehrich, 2005, 2009). Rogue individual SLT members that did not value teamwork were considered a threat to the

SLT's effectiveness (Shore & Walshaw, 2018). The research results and scholarly literature emphasise that shared leadership is an essential characteristic of an effective SLT.

5.2.2.3 Emotional Intelligence. SLT team members perceived they were most effective when the SLT displayed emotional intelligence. One SLT member commented that they were highly conscious of team members' emotional states and used humour to ease tension in the team. SLT members thought the SLT was more robust when they demonstrated an ability to recognise their own emotions and act in a way that was sensitive to and supportive of other team members. As mentioned previously, the notion of emotional intelligence was not widely used in the educational literature on teams; however, the literature did show that emotionally intelligent behaviours such as self-awareness, openness, trust, and empathy were essential to effective SLTs (Ridden, 1992; Ridden & De Nobile, 2012; Walker, 1994; Wallace & Hall, 1994a). The literature on teams beyond education has shown that a team's emotional intelligence is critical to its success and can be developed in a team environment (Druskat & Wolf, 2013). Both the literature and the perception of SLT members suggest that the emotional intelligence of SLT members is an essential characteristic of an effective SLT. This thesis highlights that emotional intelligence is an important characteristic to identify and develop in SLT members.

5.2.2.4 Effective Communication. SLT members perceived the SLT to be most effective when SLT members communicated effectively. SLT members described effective communication as open, straightforward and non-defensive. For SLT members, this included being able to raise an issue with a colleague when it occurred rather than repressing it. It also meant being able to give and receive feedback. SLT members seemed more aware of the need to communicate effectively with all stakeholders than principals. The literature on SLTs indicates that skilful communication is one of the characteristics of an effective SLT. Zappulla (2003) found that SLT members need to be open, trusting and transparent with each other. When the SLT communicated effectively, team members were sensitive but straightforward in their communication with each other and did not engage in “contrived collegiality” (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991). Various scholars suggested that effective communication must occur within and beyond the SLT (Bush et al.,

2012; Wallace & Hall, 1994a). When SLT members communicated effectively outside the team, they spoke with and listened to all stakeholders impacted by the SLTs decision-making (Bush et al., 2012; Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Thomas, 2009; Wallace & Hall, 1994a). Literature outside of educational teams suggests that the positive communication patterns of team members are one of the most significant determinants of a high-performing team (Pentland, 2013). Both the literature and the perception of SLT members indicate that clear communication inside and outside the SLT is an essential characteristic of an effective SLT.

5.2.2.5 Improvement Practices. Some SLT members reported that the SLT performed more effectively when SLT members were consciously improving their professional practice through feedback and professional learning. These SLT members reflected on their practice or provided feedback to peers. Various scholars (Cranston & Ehrich, 2005; Thomas, 2009) suggested that the most effective SLTs engaged in improvement practices. However, the scholarly literature also noted that improvement practices were underdeveloped in most SLTs and needed improvement (Bush et al., 2012; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Thomas, 2009). The perceptions of some SLT members and indications from the literature suggest that a greater focus on improvement practices in SLTs could increase their effectiveness.

5.2.2.6 Challenging Events Like COVID-19. Several SLT members recognised that the SLT worked effectively during the COVID-19 pandemic and that there was something valuable about that experience. For example, SLT members reported that the SLT was more focused during COVID-19 and more able to listen to other SLT members. Although many SLT members acknowledged the positive impact COVID-19 had on SLTs, no literature within the study of educational teams has commented on the perceived positive impact of COVID-19 on SLTs. Some literature has indicated that COVID-19 brought school communities together (Flack et al., 2021). However, the literature on teams beyond educational scholarship has noted that challenging events can enhance teamwork and team resilience (Alliger et al., 2015; Bastian et al., 2018; Thompson & Kusy, 2021) Some teams, and some people, become more effective and more united in challenging circumstances. (Alliger et al., 2015; Bastian et al., 2018; Thompson & Kusy, 2021) For example, the challenges presented by natural disasters, such as the floods in Northern New South

Wales, fostered a greater sense of community, collective responsibility, empathy and unity (The State of New South Wales, 2022). Likewise, in her study of collective resilience, Ebersohn (2018) reported that, when faced with danger, Southern African communities “flocked” together to provide a “buffer” against the threat (p. 335).

The notion that adverse or traumatic events can help communities or teams could seem counterintuitive. However, in addition to the results, the researcher's field notes indicated that the characteristics of effective teamwork were enhanced in all three SLTs during COVID-19. COVID-19 appears to have compelled SLTs to focus on what was essential to their school, such as the wellbeing of students and staff and the delivery of an educational program. Two potential insights regarding the characteristics of effective SLTs could be drawn from these accounts. One, tough times and stress are not necessarily destructive to teams. On the contrary, if a team is well-led, challenging times can be leveraged to grow the capability and resilience of a team (Thompson & Kusy, 2021). Two, the response to COVID-19 shows that SLTs achieve synergy when focusing on fewer issues. Perhaps there is value in reducing the number of items SLTs focus on – a concept that DeWitt (2022) referred to as "de-implementation" (DeWitt, 2022). DeWitt argued that senior leaders should do less things and focus on high-impact and low effort strategies.

5.2.3 The Characteristics Middle Leaders Perceive Support the Effective Functioning of the SLT

Middle leaders shared several perceptions with principals and SLT members regarding the effective functioning of the SLT. First, middle leaders perceived the SLT as most effective when there was evidence of positive relationships, shared leadership and emotional intelligence. Middle leaders also thought the SLT was more effective when it engaged with stakeholders outside the SLT, especially middle leaders.

5.2.3.1 Positive Relationships. Several middle leaders indicated that the SLT was most effective when team members demonstrated positive and trusting relationships. Middle leaders described the SLT as effective when its members acted like good friends. Some middle leaders suggested that the SLT had warm, close and personal relationships, knew each other well, and could finish each other's sentences. The insights of middle leaders shared similarities with the perceptions of principals,

and SLT members, and the literature regarding the importance of positive relationships in effective SLTs (Bush et al., 2012; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Thomas, 2009). As previously noted, many scholars described effective SLTs as containing positive relationships where team members were straightforward, caring and warm (Abbott & Bush, 2013; Macklin & Zbar, 2020)

5.2.3.2 Shared Leadership. Middle leaders considered SLT was most effective when team members shared in the school's leadership, knew their leadership roles and function and completed those roles effectively. Principals and SLT members also felt the SLT was effective when members collaborated, knew their roles and responsibilities, and helped each other out if the workload was overburdening. The literature supported middle leaders' insights, indicating that SLTs required competent senior leaders to understand and execute their tasks effectively (Bush et al., 2012; Wallace & Hall, 1994a). Both the perceptions of principals and SLT members and insights from the Literature Review suggest that shared leadership is a characteristic of an effective SLT.

5.2.3.3 Emotional Intelligence. Middle leaders recognised SLTs required emotional intelligence to be effective. For middle leaders, this was evident when the SLT members were calm, measured and relaxed. These emotionally intelligent behaviours enabled the SLT to deal with challenging and complex issues. In addition, the literature highlights that SLTs were effective when members could manage their emotions and recognise the feelings of others (Ridden, 1992; Ridden & De Nobile, 2012; Walker, 1994; Wallace & Hall, 1994a; Zappulla, 2003). Druskat and Wolf (2013) have shown that emotionally intelligent teams exhibit three characteristics: "trust among members, a sense of group identity, and a sense of group efficacy" (p. 94). Team scholars agree that unless teams have strong emotional intelligence or, similarly, psychological safety, they are likely to fail (Clark, 2020; Coyle, 2022; Delizonna, 2017; Eastwood, 2022; Edmondson, 2018).

5.2.3.4 Effective Engagement with Middle Leaders. Middle leaders perceived the SLT to be effective when the SLT engaged with middle leaders and other stakeholders. Middle leaders said this engagement was evident when the SLT consulted with middle leaders, supported them in their growth as leaders, communicated openly and showed respect to middle leaders. For example, one

middle leader cited the frequent communication from the SLT during COVID-19 as an example of the SLT engaging and communicating effectively. In addition, some middle leaders felt the SLT was effective when they respected the staff, especially middle leaders. This respect was demonstrated when SLT members listened to middle leader's concerns and supported them in their work.

Although the educational literature on SLTs did not provide extensive commentary on the SLT's engagement with middle leaders, some of the literature has noted that the SLT's ability to connect with stakeholders outside the SLT was essential to their efficacy (Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Ridden, 1992; Ridden & De Nobile, 2012). The SLT's engagement with middle leaders is an area that requires further research as the role of middle leaders in schools is growing in importance (Grootenboer et al., 2020; Lipscombe et al., 2021). The literature on middle leadership indicates that middle leaders play an increasing role in the leadership of schools and require mentoring, coaching, and professional development from senior school leaders (Grootenboer et al., 2020; Lipscombe et al., 2021). Moreover, the management research on effective teams suggests that the highest-performing teams interact with others beyond their immediate team and share insights from these interactions with the team (Pentland, 2013). The insights of middle leaders suggested that a deeper engagement with middle leaders could be an emergent characteristic of an effective SLT.

5.3 Summary

This section of the Discussion explored research sub-question one: What characteristics do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as supporting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS? The Discussion suggested principals, SLT members and middle leaders share several perceptions about what makes an SLT effective, and most of these are consistent with the scholarly literature. For example, principals, SLT members, and middle leaders agree that effective SLTs exhibit positive relationships, shared leadership and emotional intelligence. The literature on SLTs highlighted these characteristics as necessary for the effective functioning of the SLT. However, SLT members and middle leaders also identified some additional characteristics of an effective SLT which are not highlighted in the educational literature on SLTs. These were challenging events like COVID-19 which focused SLTs, the importance of an

improvement mindset and greater engagement and communication with middle leaders. Table 5.2 provides an aggregated summary of principal, SLT member and middle leader perceptions of the characteristics supporting the effective functioning of SLTs.

Table 5.2
Principal, SLT Member and Middle Leader Perceptions of the Characteristics Supporting the Effective Functioning of SLTs

Characteristic	Principal	SLT member	Middle Leader	Reference to Literature
Positive relationships	Trust, frequent positive contact with SLT members, humour, and care for each other	Trust, shared values, care, humour, forgiveness, respect, socialising	Friendly, tight-knit, and aligned	Bush et al. (2012) Cardno & Tetzlaff (2017) Earley & Wendling (2004) Macklin & Zbar (2020) Ridden (1992) Ridden & De Nobile (2012) Shore & Walshaw (2018) Thomas (2009) Zappulla (2003)
Shared leadership	Sharing the load, doing tasks together, focusing on vision	Sharing the load, sharing a leadership vision, taking on your portfolio, helping team members	Multiple leaders, portfolios of work, coordinated effort	Bush et al. (2012) Cardno & Tetzlaff (2017) Macklin & Zbar (2020) Ridden (1992) Ridden & De Nobile (2012) Stott & Walker (1999) Walker (1994) Wallace & Hall, (1994) Cranston & Ehrich (2005, 2009)
Emotional intelligence	Calm, mindful, self-regulated, present, perspective	Calm and self-regulated	Relaxed, present, available, harmonious	Chen & Guo (2018) Goleman (1996) Ridden (1992) Cranston & Ehrich (2005, 2009)
Prioritising vision and strategy	Future-focused, strategic, less operational			Avenell (2011a, b) Bush et al. (2012) Cranston & Ehrich (2005, 2009) Thomas (2009)

Characteristic	Principal	SLT member	Middle Leader	Reference to Literature
Effective communication	Humour	Honest, frequent, cooperative	Open, transparent, frequent	Bush et al. (2012) Macklin & Zbar (2020) Thomas (2009) Wallace & Hall (1994)
Positive SLT response to COVID-19		Single focus, purposeful work, collaboration, frequent meetings, support, morale, and energy		Alliger et al. (2015) Bastian (2018) Ebersöhn et al. (2018) Thompson & Kusy (2021) De Nobile (2022) Flack et al. (2021) Reardon (2022)
An improvement mindset		Preparedness to grow, improve, and reflect on practice; open to change and feedback		Thomas (2009) Hackman et al. (2009)
Effective engagement with middle leaders and other stakeholders	Available to SLT members	Available to SLT members	Listened to, supported, encouraged, involved, respected, coached and mentored	Wallace & Hall (1994) Grootenboer et al. (2020) Lipscombe et al. (2021) De Nobile (2022)

5.4 The Characteristics Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive as Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of SLTs

This section discusses the perceptions of principals, SLT members, and middle leaders regarding research sub-question two: What characteristics do principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS? First, this section discusses principal perceptions, followed by SLT and middle leader perceptions. Finally, the researcher will compare the perceptions of principals, SLT members, and middle leaders with insights from The Literature Review and the researcher's field notes.

5.4.1 The Characteristics Principals Perceive Inhibit the Effective Functioning of the SLT

The principals perceived three characteristics that inhibited the SLT. These characteristics included excessive workload, interpersonal strain and inadequate monitoring of SLT performance.

5.4.1.1 Excessive Workload. All three principals felt that the excessive workload inhibited the SLT from functioning effectively. Principals felt that busyness and varied administration tasks prevented the SLT from being more effective. For instance, one principal indicated they needed additional support with human resources and administration issues to concentrate further on the school vision and its strategic implementation. Another principal commented that constant meetings prevented SLT members from focusing on the school vision. Because of the excessive workload, SLTs could get "stuck" on operational issues and struggle to focus on vision and strategy. Although it is not explicitly discussed in the educational literature on teams, in the broader discourse on educational leadership, the excessive workload of senior leaders has been identified as a feature that could inhibit their performance. For example, The Australian Principal Occupational Health & Wellbeing Survey (2022) found that, for principals, "the number one stress is the sheer quantity of work" associated with administrative tasks (p. 3). The report also stated that "school leaders worked an average of 55.6 hours a week in 2021, more than the standard 40-hour workweek" and "with COVID-19 still causing challenges...Burnout and Cognitive Stress were the highest since this survey commenced" (p. 2). Some recent research in the context of Catholic Education in Western Australia has demonstrated that senior leaders often feel overworked (Gallin, 2022; Outtrim, 2022). Gallin (2022) reported that assistant principals were overburdened with work and often focused on managerial tasks rather than leading learning. Similarly, Outtrim (2022) observed that many female principals have substantial work and family conflicts that are difficult to maintain in a high-demand environment. As such, both the results from this study and the literature on principal and assistant principal wellbeing suggest that excessive workload is likely to inhibit SLTs. However, further research is recommended because there is no extensive research on the impact of an excessive workload on SLTs.

5.4.1.2 Interpersonal Strain. One principal highlighted that interpersonal strain inhibited the SLT. They observed that the negative behaviour of one team member could prevent the team from engaging in healthy dialogue or developing positive morale. The literature suggested interpersonal strain is one of the most inhibiting characteristics of a dysfunctional SLT. Shore and Walshaw (2018) commented that interpersonal strain could be cancerous to SLTs. Furthermore, results from the broader study of teams suggest a single negative team member can destroy team cohesion (Coyle, 2018; Felps et al., 2006). Reflecting on the possible damage one person can do to the SLT, Goodall (2013) commented that principals should "recruit for attitude and train for skills" (p. 211). To avoid interpersonal strain, Bush et al. (2012) suggested that members of high-performing SLTs should share the school's vision, show commitment to the school, establish a track record of effective teaching, show care for children and provide evidence of continuous service to the school. A potential insight from this study is that principals should pay greater attention to selecting SLT members with high emotional intelligence. The researcher's field notes suggest interpersonal strain could significantly inhibit an SLT. For example, some behaviours that inhibited the SLT included: busyness, not listening to others, ignoring peer feedback, carrying a grudge, forgetting the experience of teachers, misuse of positional power, focusing on personal goals rather than team goals, ignoring middle leaders, working in isolation, and not taking ownership of one's errors. Several sources, including this study's results and the literature, confirm that interpersonal strain inhibits SLTs.

5.4.1.3 Inadequate Monitoring of SLT Effectiveness. All principals agreed that the SLT was inhibited by the absence of systems that closely monitor team goals or improvement. One principal noted that the SLT should collect feedback on its performance but rarely did. Another commented on the need to specify goals that could be evaluated. Although the research literature says little about monitoring performance, several scholars have pointed to the need to assess the SLT's performance (Bush et al., 2012; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Thomas, 2009). Cranston and Ehrich (2005, 2009) and Thomas (2009) emphasised the importance of the team receiving feedback. The broader literature on effective teams emphasised the importance of team goals and targets supported by team coaching (Hackman, 2012). Hackman et al. (2009) found that articulating challenging goals for teams can

increase motivation and team focus. Moreover, if a team does not specify its goals, it cannot be held accountable for its results. Both the literature on SLTs, and this study indicate that the absence of monitoring of the SLT could inhibit its effectiveness.

5.4.2 The Characteristics SLT Members Perceive Inhibit the Effective Functioning of the SLT

SLT members reported that the SLT was inhibited when SLT members experienced excessive workload, poor communication, interpersonal strain and inadequate monitoring of SLT effectiveness.

5.4.2.1 Excessive Workload. Several SLT members felt that the excessive workload inhibited the SLT. The excessive workload associated with senior leadership led to stress, decreases in wellbeing, a fear of burnout, a sense of being time-poor, the inability to be strategic, no time for other leaders, and reluctance to aspire to the principalship. As was discussed in the case of principals' perceptions regarding excessive workload, the literature indicates that excessive workload is likely to inhibit the SLT from functioning effectively (Avenell, 2011a, 2011b; See et al., 2022). Moreover, the researcher's field notes indicated that SLT responsibility for excessive operational items prevented SLT members from engaging in more strategic thinking. Not having time for strategic thinking was especially acute when SLT members had a significant pastoral role in caring for students. Both the results and broader research suggest that excessive workload inhibited the SLT.

5.4.2.2 Poor Communication. One potential impact of an excessive workload was poor communication between SLT members. SLT members said poor communication occurred when SLTs were blunt, engaged in gossip or did not share information. Other indications of poor communication included unclear expectations from the principal and not communicating as a unified front. SLT members were more aware than principals of the negative impact of poor communication. Some educational scholars suggest that poor communication can undermine the SLT. For example, Wallace and Hall (1994b) noted the importance of communicating effectively within and beyond the team. Likewise, Bush et al. (2012) emphasised sharing as openly as possible through regular team meetings, distributing team minutes and positive contact with staff. This study's results and broader educational literature on SLTs indicate poor communication inhibited SLT.

5.4.2.3 Interpersonal Strain. Several SLT members noted the SLT could be inhibited by interpersonal strain. Interpersonal strain could lead to distrust between SLT members, personality clashes, withdrawal of SLT members from participation in conversations or social events, and a loss of unity and enthusiasm. In addition, interpersonal strain could lead to an absence of team unity, preventing SLT members from sharing their thinking with the team. As discussed in the section on principal perceptions, both the educational literature on SLTs and the literature beyond education strongly support the notion that interpersonal strain inhibits SLTs (Coyle, 2018; Felps et al., 2006; Goodall, 2013; Shore & Walshaw, 2018). In addition, the broader literature on effective teams has recognised the damage done by interpersonal strain and emphasised that effective teams create psychologically safe environments for team members (Coyle, 2018; Delizonna, 2017). Psychologically safe environments are not free of tension. Psychologically safe environments provide team members with the safety to deal with tension and resolve challenges more healthily and productively.

5.4.2.4 Inadequate Monitoring of SLT effectiveness. Some SLT members observed that inadequate monitoring of the SLT inhibited its effectiveness. One SLT member admitted that corporate teams have clear performance goals, but school SLTs do not. SLT members did not report on a common way of measuring their progress as a team. For example, one SLT member might suggest healthy student enrolments were an indicator of SLT success. Another might indicate the absence of negative feedback. Several SLT members recognised that the lack of performance goals inhibited the SLT's performance. As discussed in the case of principals, the literature suggests that SLTs should monitor their performance. The absence of performance measures and monitoring inhibits the effective functioning of the SLT (Bush et al., 2012; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Thomas, 2009). The researcher's field notes indicated several items that mattered to SLTs, which could be monitored and evaluated. These included: consultation with stakeholders, engagement with the strategic plan, staff perceptions of support and approachability, individual performance in portfolios, support for each other, interpersonal conflict, frequency of discussion, frequency of meetings, end-user satisfaction with communication and implementation of the school improvement plan. It would seem beneficial to SLTs if they focused on measuring one of the above items to indicate a willingness to

measure and monitor the team's effectiveness. Both the results and literature review suggest that the inadequate monitoring of the SLT could inhibit its effectiveness.

5.4.3 The Characteristics Middle Leaders Perceive Inhibit the Effective Functioning of the SLT

Middle leaders reported that the SLT was inhibited from functioning effectively when SLT members had an excessive workload, communicated poorly, were unavailable to middle leaders and experienced interpersonal strain.

5.4.3.1 Excessive Workload. Middle leaders recognised that the excessive workload associated with senior leadership inhibited the SLT's effectiveness. Several middle leaders recognised that SLT members were overloaded with work and, as a result, were stressed, too busy to think or unable to communicate effectively with middle leaders. Some middle leaders recognised that the excessive workload of the SLT inhibited them from engaging in strategic thinking. When SLT members became busy, they became unavailable and cut off from middle leadership. One middle leader described this as a "bunker mentality" where SLT members would hide when complex issues bombarded them. As discussed in the case of principals and SLT members, there is a strong consensus in both the educational literature on SLTs and the broader literature on teams that excessive workload can prevent SLTs from being cohesive, focused, and available to the stakeholders they support (Avenell, 2011a, 2011b; See et al., 2022). Middle leaders were particularly sensitive to the impact of busyness as they indicated a strong desire to work with and be nurtured by SLT members. It is evident from the results and literature that excessive workload inhibits SLTs.

5.4.3.2 Poor Communication. Some middle leaders felt that the excessive workload and stress associated with senior leadership harmed the SLT's ability to communicate clearly. Some middle leaders described the SLT as blunt in their communication. Busy SLT members could become impatient and rude to middle leaders that relied on their guidance. Several middle leaders commented that they would deliberately avoid SLT members if they knew they were busy or stressed. Several scholars have noted that the SLT must be able to communicate clearly within and also beyond the team (Ridden, 1992; Ridden & De Nobile, 2012; Wallace & Hall, 1994b) One of the researcher's field notes suggested that middle leaders may

not fully understand the priorities of SLT members and that SLT members may not recognise their role in supporting middle leaders. It seems important that SLT members develop a structured approach to communicating more frequently with middle leaders.

5.4.3.3 Unavailable to Middle Leaders. Some middle leaders linked the excessive workload of SLT members with a perceived lack of availability to middle leaders. Middle leaders noticed that when the SLT was busy, SLT members were unavailable to staff and students. Several middle leaders commented on the importance of SLT members being available and visible within the school. One middle leader described seeing SLT members in their part of the school as rare as “a sighting of the Yeti”. The literature on SLTs in education recognises that busyness can threaten the SLT's efficacy (Avenell, 2011a, 2011b; Ridden & De Nobile, 2012; Wallace & Hall, 1994a). In addition, the literature on principal wellbeing has indicated that stress impacts the school (See et al., 2022). Both the results and the literature suggest that the excessive workload may reduce the availability of SLTs to middle leaders, inhibiting the team's effectiveness.

5.4.3.4 Interpersonal Strain. Some middle leaders felt that a challenging member of the SLT could create interpersonal strain in the SLT and prevent the SLT from being effective. Middle leaders mentioned that a negative team member could stifle discussion and prevent the SLT from working on more significant issues. Some middle leaders recognised that SLT members could lack emotional intelligence. An unemotionally intelligent individual could cause considerable damage to the SLT. This observation is supported broadly in the literature regarding the impact of dysfunctional team members (Felps et al., 2006; Shore & Walshaw, 2018). One opposing team member can be cancerous to group cohesion and is not easily counteracted by multiple positive members (Felps et al., 2006; Shore & Walshaw, 2018). All groups mentioned the interpersonal strain as a characteristic that inhibited SLTs.

5.5 Summary

This section of the Discussion explored research sub-question two: What characteristics do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing CCSS? The Discussion highlighted that principals, SLT members and middle leaders shared several perceptions regarding the characteristics that inhibit SLTs and some slight differences between research participant perceptions. Principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceived that excessive workload could negatively impact the SLT. SLT members could become stressed, unavailable to each other, and more prone to rudeness, especially to middle leaders. Middle leaders, in particular, were impacted by the SLT workload as SLT members were less available to support them and more likely to be rude to them when under pressure. Principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceived that interpersonal tension could inhibit the effectiveness of the SLT by causing strain in the group. This strain prevented SLT members from feeling comfortable enough to engage in a straightforward discussion that efficiently solves problems. Principals and SLT members identified that the absence of explicit performance targets inhibited the SLT's performance. Finally, middle leaders stressed the lack of communication and availability to middle leadership as a characteristic that inhibited the SLT. The study suggests that the SLT might benefit from engaging and developing middle leaders more frequently. Table 5.3 outlines the characteristics principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS.

Table 5.3

The Characteristics Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive as Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of the SLT

	Principal	SLT member	Middle Leader	References to Literature
Excessive workload	Busy, tired, operational focus, lack of administrative support	Overwhelmed, unavailable to stakeholders, siloed thinking, stressed, poor communication	Busyness, Email overload, Too many tasks	See et al. (2021) Avenell (2011a, 2011b) Wageman et al. (2009)
Poor communication		Unclear, not sharing, lacking transparency, disunity	Unavailable, Abrupt and rude, Communicating different messages	Thomas (2009) Bush et al. (2012) Wallace & Hall (1994a)
Lack of availability to middle leaders			Unavailable to middle leaders, Withdraws, Not available for discussion or support	De Nobile (2018) Grootenboer (2020) Lipscombe et al (2021)
Interpersonal strain	Disruptive to the team, frustrating, damages meetings	Unresolved issues, personality clashes	Creating tension, Personality clashes	Coyle (2018) Felps (2006) Goodall (2013) Shore & Walshaw (2018) Wallace & Hall (1994a)

5.6 Resources or Professional Learning Principals, SLT members and Middle Leaders Perceive Will Support the Development of SLTs

This section aims to discuss the resources or professional learning that principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs. The section discusses principal perceptions and then examines SLT and middle leader perceptions.

5.6.1 Principal Perceptions of Resources or Professional Learning that Will Support the Development of SLTs

All principals in this study recognised that the SLT would benefit from better access to professional learning. One principal observed that their team engaged in individual professional learning but not whole team development. All principals

commented that the SLT had not engaged extensively in professional learning that focused on the SLT as a team. Some principals saw value in offsite spiritual retreats with their SLT. A spiritual retreat is a day of reflection and development as a team with a spiritual and religious focus. All principals felt that a centralised organisation like CEWA could support professional learning by offering high-quality professional development that enhances the functionality of the SLT and helps individual SLT members improve in their specific roles. One principal suggested networking with like-minded peers could provide practical professional learning for SLT team members. Another principal mentioned that there was an opportunity to embed SLT effectiveness training in the existing induction process for principals run by CEWA. All principals saw value in bringing their SLTs together to teach them leadership skills to create cohesion in the SLT.

Some educational literature on SLTs recognised the importance of SLT development but did not provide extensive guidance on what those resources or practices should look like (Bush et al., 2012; Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Thomas, 2009). Bush et al. (2012) found that teams need to have planned programs that are offsite, have social aspects to them, including opportunities to mix with other SLTs, and involve mentoring and coaching. They also need to focus on individual needs and team needs. Walker (1994) commented that SLTs should be appraised as teams rather than individuals. Several scholars have suggested a starting point is evaluating the team's effectiveness using self-reporting questionnaires (Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Cranston & Ehrich, 2004; Cranston & Ehrich, 2005, 2009b; Macklin & Zbar, 2020). Cranston and Ehrich (2005, 2009) indicated the importance of making time for the team to develop, evaluating the team, and setting goals for team improvement. Some research pointed to the value of working with a team coach to help the SLT unpack its strengths and weaknesses (Macklin & Zbar, 2020). Macklin and Zbar (2020) provide a useful starting point for SLTs to evaluate their effectiveness. They encourage SLTs to assess their efforts against specific team criteria, including aspects of strategy, vision, unity and the ability to engage in constructive conflict. Some principals recognised the value of networking with other senior leaders in similar schools. Although not specific to the team literature, Rincon-Gallardo and Fullan (2016) have suggested that developing relationships across schools and sharing expertise in networks is a powerful way to introduce growth and development across school systems.

5.6.2 The Perceptions of Resources or Professional Learning that SLT Members Perceive Will Support the Development of SLTs

Many SLT members recognised they had sufficient access to professional learning that improved their individual performance in their leadership roles. However, they also acknowledged that they did less deliberate professional learning to develop as a whole team. Some SLT members recognised that they were reviewed as individuals but not as the SLT. Several SLT participants thought they would benefit if they had access to resources or professional learning that improved their specific performance in their role and the team. In addition, SLT members recognised that networking with other CEWA leaders in similar positions would be valuable.

SLT members noted a broad range of topics that might improve their performance which included: mentoring, emotional intelligence, mental health, wellbeing, compliance, stewardship, modern-day slavery, legal, finance, business, Accreditation for Religious Education, timetabling, data analysis, data management, crisis management, gender dysphoria and emotional coping skills. Many SLT members believed that CEWA was uniquely positioned to share best practices from other SLTs. Some SLT members felt CEWA needed to ensure their services were of the highest professional level and that there was value in engaging external presenters. Several SLT members believed CEWA could provide a role in developing networks of experts to support professional learning. One SLT member saw value in sharing best practices in financial reporting. Many SLT members recognised that development programs such as spiritual retreats brought the SLT together and created bonding experiences. Other SLT members valued the insights discovered in personality assessments that allowed them to make sense of their place in the team and other team members' personalities.

As discussed in the section on principal perceptions of professional learning needs, a small body of literature suggests ways to develop SLTs through questionnaires and reflections, but it is not comprehensive (Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Cranston & Ehrich, 2004; Cranston & Ehrich, 2005, 2009b; Macklin & Zbar, 2020). Moreover, outside the educational literature, there are many guides to developing high-performing teams (Baker, 2021; Coyle, 2022; Eastwood, 2022; Sandahl & Phillips, 2019). However, these guides are rarely specific to education and are not easily generalisable to the educational context. Therefore, there is room for

educational scholars to guide schools in developing effective teams. In the context of CEWA, it would seem helpful to provide principals and other stakeholders with a guide that explains how to establish, grow, develop and maintain effective SLTs. The researcher has suggested a framework for this approach in Chapter 6: Review and Conclusion.

5.6.3 The Perceptions of Resources or Professional Learning that Middle Leaders Perceive Will Support the Development of SLTs

Middle leaders are not experts in senior leadership or senior leadership teams. Not surprisingly, as a focus group, middle leaders did not present a clear picture of what professional learning or resources would assist the development of SLTs. However, middle leaders recognised that networking might be valuable for the SLT. They suggested that Leaders' Forums where CEWA leaders meet with peers might support their development, and they indicated that SLT members could visit or shadow other SLTs. Some topics middle leaders suggested could support the development of the SLT included: faith formation, tough conversations, gender dysphoria, goal setting and personality assessments. Some middle leaders contended that the SLT could be improved individually and as a team. A few middle leaders noticed that spiritual retreats had played a role in developing the SLT.

Several middle leaders felt that SLT members needed specific role-based leadership training to be more effective. This training would focus on areas like management skills such as emotional intelligence, difficult conversations, managing under pressure, and time management. One middle leader recommended SLT members follow up on the feedback they receive in formal reviews. Another middle leader recognised that CEWA had a role in enabling SLT members to network and see what excellent SLTs look like. As discussed, the scholarly literature suggests that SLT development is necessary and has suggested using survey questionnaires and coaching (Cardno & Tetzlaff, 2017; Cranston & Ehrich, 2004; Cranston & Ehrich, 2005, 2009b; Macklin & Zbar, 2020). Overall, the literature on SLTs has not put forward a comprehensive development plan specific to school settings.

Researcher field notes indicated that SLTs would benefit from high-quality targeted professional learning that improved teamwork in the SLT and knowledge of future issues likely to affect the SLT. Some examples include crisis management and industrial relations. Several research participants suggested offsite retreats and a team

review would be good starting points for SLT professional learning. In addition, the literature suggests reviewing SLTs against criteria that define team effectiveness. As the literature on SLT development in the educational setting is not extensive, further suggestions regarding appropriate resources and professional learning for SLTs will be suggested in Chapter 6: Review and Conclusions.

5.7 Summary

This section of the Discussion explored research sub-question three: What resources or professional learning do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs? Principals, SLT members and middle leaders agree that the SLT would benefit from specific professional development to become a better team. Additionally, SLT members felt that specific professional development focused on their role would improve their performance in the SLT. Middle leaders felt the SLT would benefit from additional professional development on leadership skills such as managing people, developing emotional intelligence and understanding personality differences. All participants agreed that CEWA could support SLTs by providing credible, high-quality professional development focused solely on the SLT. All participants saw value in networking for the SLT, either with peers or system leaders. Table 5.4 summarises the resources and professional learning that principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of the SLT as well as the relevant literature supporting those views.

Table 5.4
Resources or Professional Learning Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive will Support the Development of SLTs

	Principal	SLT member	Middle leaders	References to literature
Team professional learning	Retreats, team development, coaching skills, a focus on vision	Retreats, team development	Retreats, team development, understanding personalities, team dynamics	Bush et al. (2012), Thomas (2009), Macklin & Zbar (2020)
Individual Leadership development	Coaching skills	Role-specific training, personality	Emotional intelligence, effective communication, performance reviews, faith formation, personality, the business of schooling	Macklin & Zbar (2020)
Networking	Work with peers with similar experience	Network with other CEWA leaders in similar roles	Leaders Forum, shadow other executive teams	Rincon-Gallardo, Fullan (2016)
Quality professional learning facilitated by CEWA	Credible high-quality presenters	Credible presenters, high quality adult learning principles	Evidence-based best practice professional learning	

5.8 Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leader Perceptions of The Principal's Role in the SLT

This section discusses how principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive the principal's role in the SLT. The section begins with a discussion of principal perceptions. Next it examines SLT and middle leader perceptions. Finally, the insights of principals, SLT members, and middle leaders are considered in light of the literature and researcher field notes.

5.8.1 Principal Perceptions of Their Role in the SLT

All principals recognised that their role was complex and multifaceted. Principals did not use a single leadership model to discuss their leadership practices. Principals did, however, perceive their role in the SLT similarly. Most principals

emphasised that they played the leadership coach, visionary, team builder, and peacekeeper role.

5.8.1.1 Leadership Coach. All three principals perceived the role in the SLT as similar to a leadership coach. A leadership coach is an individual that uses conversation to grow, develop and support others to reach their potential (Campbell & van Nieuwerburgh, 2018). Likewise, all principals perceived themselves as leaders who worked with SLT members by encouraging, developing, and supporting them in their leadership roles. One principal spoke of proactively celebrating the work of their teams so that SLT members felt valued. Another principal emphasised being a listening ear and sounding board. Finally, one principal perceived himself as encouraging dialogue in their team to come up with the best decisions.

The educational literature on SLTs suggests that principals in a team environment should employ a coaching approach to leadership (Caldwell, 1993; Caldwell & Spinks, 1992; Corrigan & Merry, 2022; Gronn, 2003; Ridden, 1992; Stott & Walker, 1999). Traditionally, in a non-team environment, secondary school principals were likely to be more directive, transactional and autocratic. However, authoritarian approaches to school leadership have been criticised because they cannot release the talents of other senior leaders or deal with the complexity of modern schools (Caldwell, 1993; Caldwell & Spinks, 1992; Corrigan & Merry, 2022; Gronn, 2003; Ridden, 1992; Stott & Walker, 1999). Corrigan and Merry's (2022) recent study of Australian principals suggests that teachers, students and parents appreciated principals who acted more like coaches than autocrats. Likewise, Collie (2021) has suggested that leadership practices that maintain teacher autonomy decrease the stress of teachers. Moreover, the principal's preference for a coaching leadership style aligned well with notions of servant leadership which several scholars considered appropriate in Catholic schools. The role of servant leaders is to heal, grow and develop other servant leaders to enrich their communities and develop a legacy of servant leaders (Greenleaf, 1977; Lavery, 2011, 2012).

5.8.1.2 Visionary. All principals agreed that their role in the SLT involved stewardship of the school's vision. Principals used different metaphors to explain their responsibility for the school's vision. One principal saw themselves as in charge of the "big picture", and another said they were "driving the bus", which meant being

responsible for taking people on a journey. All principals recognised that being visionary was a crucial part of their role. Insights from the educational literature on teams suggest that an essential aspect of the principal's role is to take charge of the school's vision and inspire others to achieve it (Leithwood et al., 2020). The literature on educational leadership described this type of leader as transformational (Marzano et al., 2005). Transformational leaders motivate others to get on board with the school's vision. Hattie (2015) and Robinson (2018) argued that the principal's vision should strongly focus on instructional leadership. However, principals in this study did not strongly perceive themselves as just instructional leaders. One potential reason secondary principals did not emphasise instructional leadership was that they might outsource this function of their leadership to specific expert SLT members responsible for leading teaching and learning. As stewards of the school's vision, secondary principals are often more involved in ensuring SLT members cover all aspects of the vision than they are in being experts in one particular area. As this research was conducted during the COVID-19 period (2021), it was clear that principals monitored many portfolios or worked in addition to focusing on the instructional culture of the school.

5.8.1.3 Team Builder. All principals felt it was their responsibility to build the SLT. Building the team involved selecting members, supporting and developing team members, and focusing on the shared vision. All principals recognised they had an essential role in gelling the team together and ensuring members felt supported in their roles and responsibilities. One principal saw regular conversations to actively connect and build the team. All principals acknowledged that their job was to establish the team's culture. One principal admitted they created a positive culture by using humour to ease tension.

The literature suggested the principal's role is increasingly conceptualised as a team builder. Macklin and Zbar (2020) argued that the principal's first job is to form a great team around them. Leithwood et al. (2020) recognised that the most influential leaders employed a strategy of distributed leadership. Several scholars commented that effective principals enabled SLTs to flourish (Caldwell, 1993; Caldwell & Spinks, 1992; Corrigan & Merry, 2022; Gronn, 2003; Harris, 2008; Ridden, 1992; Stott & Walker, 1999). The researcher's field notes observed that principals acted as the steward of the school's story and the SLTs' moral purpose.

The principal connected the SLT to the past and the future. In the early stages of this research, the researcher shared the view of some scholars that the principal's role was over-emphasised compared to the SLT (Cranston & Ehrich, 2005; Gronn, 2000, 2003; Ridden, 1992; Rost, 1997). As the researcher considered the results, they understood that the SLT and the principal had more of a symbiotic relationship. In other words, the principal and the SLT are both critical, but the SLT cannot function well without the stabilising effect of a well-grounded principal.

5.8.1.4 Peacekeeper. All principals felt they played an essential role in maintaining the emotional stability of the group and acting as peacekeepers. One principal felt that because their emotional state was contagious, they must always remain calm and in control. Another principal recognised that they used perspective and humour to calm their team down. Finally, one principal commented that they played a constructive role in helping SLTs to ease tension and resolve conflict.

The literature, especially that relating to leading in a Catholic context, suggests the importance of leaders being arbiters of peace and healing (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2008, 2009; Catholic Education Western Australia, 2021b; Edwards, 1989). The notion of Christ-centred leadership suggests that the principals' role was to be a presence for peace in the group. In addition, Christ-centred leadership emphasised the importance of showing love to everyone, especially those experiencing suffering (Catholic Education Western Australia, 2021b; Edwards, 1989; Sofield & Kuhn, 1995). Similarly, the concept of servant leadership identified the importance of healing people and helping them reach their potential (Greenleaf, 1977).

5.8.2 *SLT Member Perceptions of the Principal's Role in the SLT*

SLT members felt that the principal's role was to function as a leadership coach, visionary, team builder, peacekeeper and faith leader.

5.8.2.1 Leadership Coach. Several SLT members perceived the principal to be acting as a leadership coach. SLT members described the principal as someone who listens deeply and empowers others. SLT members described the principal as highly available and very supportive. Few SLT members saw principals as controlling, transactional or instructional. As discussed in the section on principal perceptions of their roles, the literature indicated that effective modern principals

acted more like leadership coaches willing to share their leadership with highly competent peers (Leadership, 2009; Leithwood et al., 2020). The contemporary principal's job appears to involve less specific technical expertise from the principal and more coaching and development of those around them (Campbell & van Nieuwerburgh, 2018; Corrigan & Merry, 2022).

5.8.2.2 Visionary. Several SLT members saw the principal's role as a visionary. The perception of the principal as a visionary was captured in the metaphors used by SLT members to describe the principal's role. For example, various SLT members described the principal as a captain, looking after the big picture, the DNA of the school, and a CEO and overseer. There were two aspects to the role of visionary. On the one hand, SLT members saw the principal embodying the past - the values, the stories, and religious practices. On the other hand, other SLT members recognised that the principal represented the future and the changes required to make the school effective. In some ways, the principal has the qualities of the Roman God Janus. Designed with two heads, one looking forward and the other looking back, Janus was the doorway to the past and future. Likewise, principals are expected to connect their school's vision with the 2000-year-old mission of the Catholic Church while understanding future students' needs. The literature suggests that an essential aspect of the principal's role is to take charge of the school's vision and inspire others to achieve it. This kind of leader was described in the literature as transformational (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Burns, 1978; Marzano et al., 2005). Transformational leaders motivate others to engage in change and improvement.

5.8.2.3 Team Builder. SLT members perceived the principal to be a team builder. Several SLT members believed the principal's role was to build an effective team by selecting relevant, competent members and monitoring their development and performance. Some SLTs mentioned that they had been hand selected to form part of the team. Some SLT members commented that the principal's role was to form and maintain the SLT. As mentioned previously in the section on principal perceptions, several researchers have indicated that staff and students preferred principals with a more democratic and team captain style of leadership (Corrigan & Merry, 2022; Leithwood et al., 2020).

5.8.2.4 Peacekeeper. As was the case for principals, SLT members recognised that the principal played a peacekeeping role in the SLT. Several SLT members saw the principal as a leader who calmed and eased the tension. Skilled principals used dialogue and humour to relieve tension and show SLT members a better way and a better future. The literature on Catholic leadership suggests that the principal is expected to play a role where through their example, based on Christ, they keep the peace (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009; Catholic Education Western Australia, 2021b; Lavery, 2011, 2012). In CEWA, the principal is seen as a Christ-centred servant leader. They are encouraged to present the face of Jesus to the team and the school (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2009; Catholic Education Western Australia, 2021b). Insights from the literature suggest that peacekeeping is an aspect of Christ-centred-servant leadership.

5.8.2.5 Faith Leader. Several SLT members believed the principal's role was to embody the Catholic faith. One SLT member recognised that the principal displayed their faith leadership by treating everyone with dignity and upholding the school's Catholic values. Many SLT members spoke positively about the ability of principals to make people feel cared for and loved, especially the SLT. Others noted that the principal played a role in formally representing the Church in Mass and other public contexts. Results from the document search and literature review suggest that the principal is expected to act as the faith leader of the school. As is made clear in the The mand Mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009-2015 (2009), the principal represents the Church and the face of Jesus. The Mandate has stated:

The principal leads the school community. The principal promotes its evangelisation purposes, its aims and ethos, its development as a faith community, and the outcomes of its curriculum, including the Religious Education program... All who are called to leadership roles in Catholic schools, especially principals, must remember that, as leaders in the Church, theirs are roles of Christian service...They are to reflect the Christ who came to serve rather than to be served. (Para. 94-95)

Researcher field notes indicated that some principals function like a fractal of the Catholic faith. A fractal is a shape that repeats itself to create beautiful patterns. For example, the principal may seek to embody the spirit of service represented by the shape of the religious founder. Yet the founder is also an embodiment of the figure of Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is an embodiment of God in human form. Although it could seem grandiose, the principal was perceived as presenting the face of Jesus, and therefore God, to their communities. This conceptualisation of the principal's role is consistent with the literature on Christ-centred and servant leadership (Dosen & Rieckhoff, 2016; Edwards, 1989; Lavery, 2011, 2012).

5.8.3 Middle Leader Perceptions of the Principal's Role in the SLT

Middle leaders do not have many opportunities to observe how the principal leads the SLT. Therefore, not surprisingly, middle leaders had less to say about the principal's leadership role in the SLT. That said, in a similar way to principals and SLT members, middle leaders also perceived the principal's role in the SLT to be like a coach, visionary, peacekeeper and team builder. Middle leaders stressed that the principal was a supportive coach and mentor to SLT members. Middle leaders noted that the principal listened to SLT members and was very available to SLT members. Some middle leaders also recognised that principals focused on building the team and establishing its culture. Middle leaders also observed that the principal brought peace to the SLT during difficult times. As discussed in the previous sections on principal and SLT perceptions, the literature supported the notion that effective contemporary principals act as coaches, visionaries, peacekeepers and team builders (Caldwell, 1993; Caldwell & Spinks, 1992; Corrigan & Merry, 2022; Gronn, 2003; Ridden, 1992; Stott & Walker, 1999).

5.9 Summary

The purpose of this section of the Discussion was to explore research sub-question four: How do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive principals' role in the SLT? Principals, SLT members and middle leaders shared the view that the principal's role was to be a leadership coach, visionary, team builder and peacekeeper. SLT members and middle leaders stressed the importance of the principal acting as an informal and formal faith leader. The literature relevant to the principal's leadership suggested that effective principals behave like leadership

coaches. The concept of a leadership coach resonated with the healing capabilities of the servant leader. Several critics - especially those writing about distributed leadership - suggest the importance of the principal acting as a team builder. The scholarship recognised the importance of the principal being a visionary, like the notion of a transformational leader. The literature also suggested that effective principals are peacekeepers and have qualities similar to servant and Christ-centred-servant leadership. While the instructional aspects of leadership are often emphasised in the literature on educational leadership (Hattie, 2015a; Robinson, 2018), these were not strongly referenced by principals in this study. One possible reason instructional leadership is not emphasised by principals is because instructional leadership functions are often delegated to an SLT member responsible for leading teaching and learning. Table 5.5 summarises principals, SLT members and middle leaders' perceptions of the principal's role in the SLT.

Table 5.5
Principal, SLT Members and Middle Leaders' Perceptions of the Principal's Role in the SLT

	Principal	SLT member	Middle leaders	Relevant literature
Leadership coach	Coach, listener, feedback, clarity seeking, solutions, celebrate, sounding board, heart and soul, voice of experience, sounding bound, dialogue, support, empowerment	Available, listen, solve problems, open door, willing to listen, sounding board, empower	Sit and listen, get a feel, collect information, open door, [that] willingness to listen, and being someone who will take it.	Caldwell (1993) Caldwell & Spinks (1992) Corrigan & Merry, (2022) Harris (2008) Ridden and De Nobile (2012) Stott & Walker (1999)
Visionary	Visionary. strategic directions, big picture, captain, director	The vision, DNA, bigger picture, guide, vision, mission, captain, point of accountability, oversees the vision	Drive vision, share vision, empower others	Leithwood (2020) Marzano (2004) Hattie (2015) Robinson (2018)

	Principal	SLT member	Middle leaders	Relevant literature
Team builder	Select, appoint, diversity, regular conversations, gel, keep them in their lane, function well, take care, lead culture, crack a joke	Great team underneath, selected members, needs, support, chose, right people, right spots, monitor, recognise strengths, empower, stewards, oversight, play well together	Bring the team together	Caldwell (1993), Caldwell & Spinks (1992) Corrigan & Merry, (2022) Gronn (2003) Harris (2008) Ridden and De Nobile (2012) Stott & Walker (1999)
Peacekeeper	Emotional stability, management, regulation, relaxing, generating positive perspective, resolving tension, supporting SLT	Calming effect, resolving tension, good leader, dealing with it, bringing it to a head, hope, optimism, care, support	Calm face in a storm	Greenleaf (1977) Edwards (1989) Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (2009) Catholic Education Western Australia (2021a) Catholic Education Western Australia (2021b) Lavery (2011)
Faith leader		role model, eucharistic minister, Attend Mass, chief pastor, chief advocate for our mission, trusting participant, bring us back, Gospel lens	setting that culture of trust and collegiality.	Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (2009) Sofield & Kuhn (1995) Keane & Riley (1997)

5.10 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter discussed the overarching research question in this study: What are the characteristics of SLTs in high-performing CCSS? In addition, the chapter compared the results of this study in Chapter Four with relevant literature from Chapter Two. The researcher's field notes were also used to address the question. The discussion of the results was structured in four sections based on the four research sub-questions listed below:

1. What characteristics do principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive as supporting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS?
2. What characteristics do principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing CCSS?
3. What resources or professional learning do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs?
4. How do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive the principals' role in the SLT?

Table 5.6 completes this chapter by comparing the perceptions of principals, SLT members, middle leaders regarding the four research sub-questions. This chapter provides a foundation for the following chapter, which presents the review and conclusion of this study.

Table 5.6

A Comparison of the Perceptions of Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Regarding the Four Research Sub-Questions

	Characteristics that enhance the SLT	Characteristics that inhibit the SLT	Resources that support the development of the SLT	The principal's role in the SLT
Principals	Positive relationships, shared leadership, emotional stability, prioritising vision and strategy	Excessive workload, interpersonal strain, problematic team member, lack of administrative support, absence of team performance evaluation	Retreats, team professional development, networking	Leadership coach, team builder, visionary, peacekeeper
Senior leaders	Positive relationships, shared leadership, emotional stability, effective communication, challenging event (COVID-19),	Excessive workload, interpersonal strain, poor communication, absence of team performance evaluation	Team professional development, role focused professional development, networking, quality professional learning	Leadership coach, team builder, visionary, peacekeeper, faith leader

	Characteristics that enhance the SLT	Characteristics that inhibit the SLT	Resources that support the development of the SLT	The principal's role in the SLT
	improvement mindset			
Middle leaders	Positive relationships shared leadership emotional stability effective communication availability to middle leaders	Excessive workload, interpersonal strain, poor communication, unavailability to middle leaders, administrivia	Team professional development, individual leadership development	Leadership coach team builder, visionary, peacekeeper
Aggregated characteristics	Positive relationships, shared leadership, emotional stability prioritising vision and strategy, effective communication, availability to middle leaders, an improvement mindset, unified focus as a result of challenging events (COVID-19)	Excessive workload, interpersonal strain, poor communication, unavailability to middle leaders, administrivia, lack of administrative support	Team professional learning, retreats, role-focused professional development, Individual leadership development, networking, quality professional learning	Leadership coach, team builder, visionary, peacekeeper faith leader

Chapter 6

Review and Conclusions

6.1 Purpose of the Research

This research explored the characteristics of SLTs in three high-performing CEWA composite and secondary schools (CCSS). The overarching research question was: What are the characteristics of SLTs in high-performing CCSS? The research sought to address a gap in the scholarly and professional knowledge about SLTs in the context of CCSS. Insights were sought into the perceptions of principals, SLT members and middle leaders regarding what made SLTs effective and ineffective. The study examined professional learning and resources that could support the SLT. Finally, the study investigated the principal's role in the SLT. As a result of this research, the researcher created a High-Performing Senior Leadership Team Framework for CCSS. The framework described the characteristics of effective SLTs and could be used to support the development of SLTs. The framework is explained further in this chapter.

Table 6.1

Overview of Chapter Six: Review and Conclusions

6.1	Introduction
6.2	Design of the research
6.3	Research questions answered
6.4	Broader themes in the research
6.5	The High Performing Senior Leadership Teams Framework for CCSS
6.6	Benefits and limitations of the research
6.7	Knowledge added to the field of study
6.8	Implications of the study for the profession
6.9	Recommendations
6.10	Conclusion
6.11	Personal impact statement
6.12	Addendum

6.2 Design of the Research

The theoretical framework of this thesis was qualitative. The study sought to gain insight into the perceptions of principals, SLT members and middle leaders regarding the characteristics of SLTs. The epistemology underpinning the research was constructivist. The theoretical perspective employed in the research design was interpretivism, specifically symbolic interactionism. The researcher chose symbolic interactionism as its theoretical perspective because it sought to understand SLTs from the standpoint of both team members of the SLT (principal and senior leaders) and middle leaders who have direct contact with the SLT. The researcher chose an instrumental case study as the methodology as they wanted to shed light on the specific phenomenon of the SLT. The research methods chosen included semi-structured one-to-one interviews, focus groups, document search and field notes. The research design was structured around the four research sub-questions listed below.

1. What characteristics do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as supporting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS?
2. What characteristics do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as inhibiting the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing CCSS?
3. What resources or professional learning do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs?
4. How do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive the principal's role in the SLT?

The data analysis followed the interactive methods of Miles et al. (2020), which included three recursive analytical cycles: data condensation, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions.

6.3 Research Questions Answered

This study provided an understanding of the working of SLTs. Answers to the four research sub-questions are presented below.

6.3.1 What Characteristics do Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive as Supporting the Effective Functioning of the SLT in High-performing CCSS?

Principals, SLT members, and middle leaders shared similar perceptions regarding the characteristics that support the effective functioning of an SLT. For

example, they identified that positive relationships were central to effective SLTs. By positive relationships, principals, SLT members and middle leaders meant warm, respectful, forgiving, collegial relationships. Principals, SLT members, and middle leaders felt that SLT members should share in the school's leadership. Sharing in the school's leadership occurred in two ways. First, SLT members led their own portfolios of work. Second, SLT members supported each other when busy. Principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceived the characteristics of emotional intelligence as essential to the stability and effectiveness of the SLT. All participants observed that the SLT was most effective when it focused on the school's vision and strategy in addition to operational duties, which could sometimes distract the SLT from big-picture issues.

There were some minor differences between principals, SLT members, and middle leaders regarding perceptions of the characteristics supporting the effective functioning of the SLT. SLT members observed that a challenging event like COVID-19 could help unite the SLT. Some SLT members regarded an improvement mindset as an important characteristic of an effective team. A few SLT members and middle leaders stressed the importance of the SLT communicating well within and beyond the SLT. Middle leaders felt the SLT was more effective when it engaged more frequently with middle leaders and other stakeholders.

6.3.2 What Characteristics do Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive as Inhibiting the Effective Functioning of the SLT in High-performing CCSS?

Principals, SLT members, and middle leaders shared similar perceptions regarding the characteristics that inhibited the effective functioning of SLTs. There was strong agreement between all research participants that an excessive workload inhibited the SLT. An excessive workload made SLT members stressed and overworked and prevented them from being strategic and engaging with key groups in the school, such as middle leaders. Principals, SLT members and middle leaders were unanimous in their view that interpersonal strain could inhibit the SLT. If there was interpersonal strain between SLT members, SLT members might retreat and minimise their contribution to the SLT. Both principals and SLT members recognised that SLTs struggled to define or evaluate specific goals for the team, which negatively impacted the team's performance. Middle leaders felt the SLT

should engage with them more as a group and with other stakeholders. Not engaging beyond the SLT could prevent the SLT from understanding what was happening in the school.

6.3.3 What Resources or Professional Learning Do Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive Will Support the Development of SLTs?

Principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceived that various forms of professional learning could support the development of SLTs. Principals, SLT members and middle leaders felt spiritual retreats could be valuable in developing SLTs. Spiritual retreats allow SLT members to relax and connect on a human and spiritual level. Principals, SLT members and middle leaders also felt that professional development focused on cultivating the team and individuals in their specific roles was important. For example, SLTs would benefit from engaging in professional learning that showed them how to interact better or evaluate their team's performance. SLT members recognised that professional development tailored to SLT member leadership portfolios would also support the development of the SLT. For example, an individual SLT member responsible for teaching and learning or business management would benefit from improving their professional expertise. Several SLT members emphasised a need for high-quality professional development facilitated by experts, some of whom might be external to CEWA. Some middle leaders recognised that SLT could be developed both as a team and individually for their role in the SLT. A few middle leaders emphasised the importance of SLT members developing soft skills like emotional intelligence to enhance their leadership.

6.3.4 How do Principals, SLT Members and Middle Leaders Perceive the Principal's Role in the SLT?

Principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceived the principal's role in the SLT similarly. They believed an effective principal acted as a leadership coach, team builder, visionary and peacekeeper. As a leadership coach, the principal was a good listener who helped SLT members solve their challenges and reach their potential. As a team builder, the principal developed the SLT, ensuring SLT members interacted socially and everyone listened to each other's ideas and remained focused on the school's vision. As a visionary, the principal had an eye on the future

and a foot in the past. The principal also had to remain calm when events like COVID-19 provided an unprecedented threat to the stability of the school. Finally, SLT members and middle leaders noted that the principal was also a faith leader who actively represented the Church, its culture and traditions.

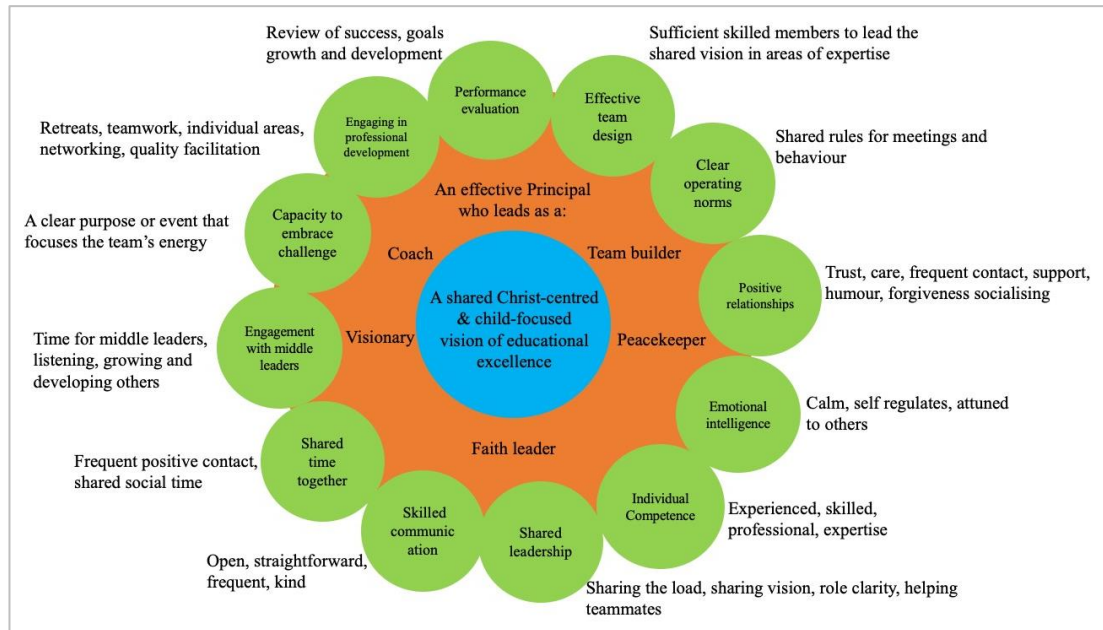
6.4 Broader Themes in the Research

Some additional themes emerged from the research that may have relevance to SLTs or the study of educational leadership. First, challenging times and stress are not necessarily destructive to teams. For example, the research was conducted during COVID-19, and participant perceptions suggested that if a team is well-led, such challenging times might be leveraged to grow the capability and resilience of a team. Second, the research indicated that principals and SLT members might underestimate their impact on middle leaders, as middle leaders value their connection to the SLT. Third, excessive workload emerged as an issue for members of the SLT and could be associated with some downstream effects, such as stress and interpersonal strain. The researcher acknowledges that the pressure of senior leadership may be intrinsic to the role; however, it is recommended that CEWA provide guidance and support around how senior leaders can deal with these increasing demands of executive school leadership.

6.5 The High-Performing Senior Leadership Team Framework for CEWA Composite and Secondary Schools (CCSS)

As a result of this study, the researcher designed a framework to explain the characteristics of effective or high-performing SLTs. The framework synthesised the study's Presentation of Results with results from the Review of Literature and insights from the researcher's field notes and document search. By creating the framework, the researcher aimed to draw attention to characteristics that enhance SLTs. It is hoped the framework can support the professional growth, development and review of SLTs in CCSS. The framework is described in Figure 6.1.

Figure 6.1
The High Performing Senior Leadership Team Framework for CCSS



The High Performing Senior Leadership Team Framework for CCSS is built around three concentric circles. The first (blue) and second circles (orange) represent the two preconditions of high-performing SLTs. The third circle (green) includes the 12 connected characteristics that enhance the effective functioning of the SLT. The following section explains the framework in more detail.

6.5.1 Preconditions of an Effective Senior Leadership Team

In their work on school improvement, Macklin and Zbar (2020) use the term precondition to suggest that specific characteristics, such as shared leadership, high expectations and an orderly learning environment, must be in place before a school can improve. Likewise, the researcher has suggested that effective SLTs have preconditions. The first precondition is a shared Christ-centred and child-focused vision. The second is an effective principal.

6.5.1.1 Precondition One: A Shared Christ-centred and Child-focused Vision. In an SLT with a shared Christ-centred and child-focused vision, the SLT is clear about the school's vision and the SLTs role in making that vision come to life. The school vision is embedded in the vision of CEWA and adapted for the school context. Each person in the SLT is responsible for a vital aspect of the school's

vision. That responsibility is typically associated with their role. The shared vision comes to life when all team members focus on their roles. In an effective SLT, the SLT may have worked on a document that details the SLT's vision. SLT members know their tasks and why they need to complete them. The SLT have communicated their team vision to relevant stakeholders across the school, especially middle leaders.

6.5.1.2 Precondition Two: An Effective Principal. The principal's effective leadership is the second precondition of an effective SLT. The principal embodies the school's values and actively supports the SLTs to perform at their best. In an effective SLT, the principal actively leads the SLT as a coach, team builder, peacekeeper, and faith leader. The principal is responsible for designing the SLT to achieve the school's vision. They create structures that allow the team to coordinate their efforts effectively. The principal takes responsibility for leading the team. The principal grows and develops SLT members and the whole team. They seek feedback on their team leadership and adjust their behaviour to be more effective in their team leader role. The principal secures resources for their team and eliminates obstacles to the team performing their roles.

6.5.2 *The Characteristics of an Effective SLT*

Team scholars often list the characteristics of effective teams without specifying a rigid hierarchy (Bush et al., 2012; Macklin & Zbar, 2020; Thomas, 2009). Although the researcher agrees that all characteristics in the The High Performing Senior Leadership Team framework are important, the characteristics are arranged in a clockwise structure so that users of this framework have a practical place to begin their work with the SLT. For example, if one was to create an effective SLT, it would seem essential to design the SLTs structure (characteristic 1) before evaluating the team's performance (characteristic 12). The 12 characteristics of the SLT are defined further in the following section.

6.5.2.1 Characteristic One: Effective Team Design. The principal actively selects SLT members with the experience and technical capacity to share in leading the school's vision. The SLT addresses the duties and responsibilities of the Catholic school Principal in the areas of Catholic Identity, Education, Community, and Stewardship. SLT members' roles and responsibilities are defined as shared

responsibilities. SLT members have clear portfolios of work but do not work in silos. SLT members have clear role descriptions. In addition, they know how their roles relate to other SLT roles in bringing the vision to life. The SLT meets to solve challenges, and members are willing to help each other when overburdened. The composition of the SLT covers all aspects of the school vision but does not include surplus team members. The principal has defined and documented the roles and capabilities required in the SLT and connected these to the school vision. Sometimes, SLT members may swap roles on the SLT periodically to enhance their leadership capacity. The principal selects members based on their capacity to bring the school vision to life and create a positive culture. The SLT has administrative support in their specific work to ensure they lead rather than manage their portfolio.

6.5.2.2 Characteristic Two: Clear Operating Norms. The SLT has well-established rules and norms for working together. These include structures that determine how often the team meets, socialises and engages in professional development. Explicit operating norms also refer to standards of behaviour and ways of communicating. The SLT frequently meets, both formally and informally. The team engages in spiritual practices such as prayer and Mass. The SLT have formal structures like meeting agendas. The team have agreed on ways to behave as a team. The team believes in the importance of teamwork.

6.5.2.3 Characteristic Three: Positive Relationships. The SLT's culture is friendly, warm and positive. SLT members are attentive to one another's needs and work together with a spirit of appreciation, gratitude, joy, and optimism. Members trust each other and feel safe being themselves. Team members express their opinions freely and skillfully and are comfortable trying new skills, making mistakes and challenging the status quo. Team members want the best for each other and help each other realise their potential. The team are professional, but the team culture has a feeling of community and family. In an SLT with a clear positive culture, all SLT members contribute equally to team discussion. Team meetings include time to inquire into the well-being of others. In addition, the team reviews its ability to create a psychologically safe workplace.

6.5.2.4 Characteristic Four: Emotional Intelligence. Effective SLT team members regulate their own emotions and are sensitive to the feelings of other SLT

members. Members are calm, predictable and consistent in their behaviours. SLT members can communicate skillfully, listen to challenging messages and respond with emotional maturity. Some indicators of an SLT with emotional intelligence include giving and receiving formal feedback from peers. SLT members target the improvement of emotional intelligence in their growth and development plans. Typically, the principal models, values and encourages the team's display of emotional intelligence.

6.5.2.5 Characteristic Five: Individual Competence. In an SLT with strong individual competence, SLT members have unique skills and experience, which help them achieve their portfolio goals. SLT members are experienced and skilled leaders able to serve and secure the committed followership of others. The team members are senior leaders with specific expertise that helps the team grow its capacity and capability to achieve the school vision. The team members have established experience and credibility in their field of expertise.

6.5.2.6 Characteristic Six: Shared Leadership. The SLT share leadership in two ways. Firstly, each member has a portfolio of work and leads it. SLT members share leadership when they help each other, especially when overburdened with work. The leadership portfolios are outlined. Team members know who is responsible for which portfolios and tasks. Secondly, SLT members step up to help other SLT members when the workloads increase.

6.5.2.7 Characteristic Seven: Skilled Communication. The SLT communicates clearly about their challenges. Team members can self-regulate and skillfully share concerns and solutions. Team members do not engage in groupthink to avoid conflict. The team communicates well externally to all key stakeholders, sharing as much information as possible. SLT members communicate effectively in and outside the team. The team meets and communicates frequently with middle leadership to support their growth, development and leadership.

6.5.2.8 Characteristic Eight: Shared Time Together. Effective SLTs enjoy being around each other and prioritise time to connect socially. As professionals, the team meets frequently. As colleagues, the team makes time for social gatherings and birthday celebrations where team members connect with their shared humanity. The

SLT recognises that teams take time to mature and develop and that the longer they stick together and create a positive culture, the better they perform. The principal aims to create team cohesion. They appoint team members who are already a good fit for the team culture and may have excellent relationships across the school.

6.5.2.9 Characteristic Nine: Engagement with Middle Leaders. Effective SLTs prioritise their leadership to extend beyond the SLT and into middle leadership. Effective SLTs get out of their offices and work with the middle leaders. Developing middle leaders is an important role in the SLT. The SLT require middle leaders to help them lead the school. This broader engagement is evident when SLT members meet with, coach, and mentor middle leaders.

6.5.2.10 Characteristic Ten: Capacity to Embrace Challenge. The SLT rallies together and feels motivated to embrace a compelling challenge. The SLT embraces challenges and deliberately sets goals linked to the team vision. These goals support the team to focus on their priorities and raise their collective performance. The principal works with the team to create challenging goals.

6.5.2.11 Characteristic Eleven: Engaging in Professional Development. The SLT, as a unit, and individuals in the team, engage in professional learning that aims to develop their potential as a team. New team members are inducted into the culture and practices of the team and constantly supported to be their best. Team members and the team engage in regular reflection and growth, and development activities. In addition, the SLT engage in specific professional development to work better as a team.

6.5.2.12 Characteristic Twelve: Performance Evaluation. SLTs that succeed know what they are aiming at. In an SLT that evaluates its performance, the SLT creates, monitors and evaluates team goals. The SLT has a strategy and processes for achieving its goals. The team monitors and responds to progress towards its goals. The SLT have incentives to achieve the goals and practical consequences for failure. The achievement of goals is communicated and celebrated internally and externally. The failure to achieve goals is addressed and communicated.

6.6 Benefits and Limitations of the Research

There are two potential benefits of this research. First, the research is the first study to provide insight into the characteristics of SLTs in CCSS. As such, the research could help many Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) stakeholders who support and develop SLTs. These previously mentioned stakeholders may include principals, SLT members, the CEWA executive, School Improvement Advisors, Leadership Consultants and School Support Consultants, The Catholic Secondary Principals' Association, and The Catholic Secondary Deputy Principals' Association. Second, although this research is about CCSS, this research may have relevance to other SLTs in Catholic Education, especially those with substantial contextual similarities across Australia's capital cities. Some faith-based schools with a Christ-centred vision may also find the research relevant to their context.

One potential limitation of this research is its generalisability. The instrumental case study is indicative of three metropolitan SLTs in CCSS. The researcher's results are likely to be most generalisable to SLTs in Catholic secondary schools with similar contexts rather than all secondary and composite schools. For example, the perception of the principal's role in the SLT is deeply embedded in Catholic notions of Christ-centred servant leadership and may not be relevant to a secular context.

6.7 Knowledge Added to the Field of Study

This research added knowledge to the field of study in six ways. First, as previously mentioned, the research is the first qualitative study to share principal, SLT members and middle leader perceptions regarding the characteristics of SLTs in CCSS. As such, it adds knowledge about the formation and development of SLTs in education. Second, the thesis describes the knowledge of characteristics that enhance SLTs. It suggested effective SLTs exhibit positive relationships, shared leadership and emotional intelligence, positive responses to challenging events, a willingness to improve and greater engagement and communication with middle leaders. Third, the research articulates knowledge of the characteristics that inhibit SLTs, such as interpersonal strain, a lack of evaluation of team performance, limited engagement with middle leaders, and excessive workload. Fourth, the study added knowledge to the field of study about preferred professional learning for SLTs. It showed that

SLTs would benefit from individual team member development, team professional development, team retreats, and a focus on soft skills. Fifth, the research added knowledge to the field of study about the perceptions of the principal’s role in SLTs. It showed that in their leadership of the SLT, principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceived the principal as a leadership coach, team builder, visionary, peacekeeper and faith leader. Sixth, the study provided a framework for building high-performing SLTs in CCSS. The framework synthesised the research results that may be useful to stakeholders supporting or developing SLTs. Table 6.1 outlines the knowledge added to the field of study.

Table 6.1
Summary of Knowledge Added to the Field of Study

Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The first study of SLTs in CCSS – Knowledge of characteristics that enhance SLTs – Knowledge of the characteristics that inhibit SLTs – Knowledge around preferred professional learning for SLTs – Knowledge about the changing perceptions of the principal's role in SLTs – The provision of a framework for the development of SLTs

6.8 Implications of the Study for the Profession

This research may have implications for all stakeholders that support senior leadership teams in Catholic Education Western Australia. The results and the proposed framework provide one step towards establishing more robust processes around reviewing and developing effective SLTs in CCSS. Finally, this research may also have implications for teaching educational leadership in tertiary settings, especially post-graduate studies. The following recommendations will build on the implications of this study in more detail.

6.9 Recommendations

This research highlighted that SLTs play a vital role in the leadership of CEWA schools. Therefore, there is a need to support, train, develop and review them. However, the research also suggested that there were limited resources and

professional learning to support SLTs, especially in CEWA. To address this situation, seven recommendations are presented.

The first recommendation is for CEWA to build on the work of this research and develop an SLT framework for growing, developing and reviewing SLTs. To improve SLTs, principals and SLT members require a clear vision of an effective SLT. The High Performing Senior Leadership Teams Framework for CCSS, outlined in Figure 6.1, offers a starting point for this work.

The second recommendation is that CEWA provides professional learning on SLTs for all stakeholders that work with principals and SLTs. Some of the results of this research may support the work of these stakeholders who work diligently to impact the leadership efficacy of SLTs. The main stakeholders targeted for professional learning about SLTs include The CEWA Executive, School Improvement Advisors, Leadership Consultants and School Support Consultants, Catholic Secondary Principals Associations and the Catholic Secondary Deputy Principals Associations.

The third recommendation is that CEWA support principals to appoint, review and develop their SLTs. To create a successful SLT, the selected SLT member must have excellent relationship-building skills, professional competence, and the ability to fit into the SLT. CEWA has an opportunity to support principals in selecting, developing and retaining excellent staff for its SLTs.

The fourth recommendation is that CEWA develops systems that review, develop and reward the SLT rather than individuals. Performance appraisal systems that focus on individuals alone may unwittingly discourage teamwork. Therefore, it is recommended that CEWA and its principals collaborate to develop review systems that measure and reward teamwork in SLTs.

The fifth recommendation is to complete further research into senior leaders' workloads. The study shared the views of several recent scholars who have identified that the excessive administrative workload of CEWA senior leaders can inhibit effective leadership and personal well-being (Gallin, 2023; Glasson, 2014; Outtrim, 2022; Riley, 2021). Therefore, it is recommended that CEWA consider engaging in further research about workloads for senior leadership teams and consider strategies to manage or minimise the workload on SLT members.

The sixth recommendation is for CEWA to research primary school SLTs. Primary schools are quite distinct from secondary schools in their leadership

structures. For example, the average size of the SLTs in this study was seven. By contrast, some of CEWA's most populous primary schools have fewer than four SLT members. Some small primary schools will have a principal and no SLT. As there are more than 120 primary schools in the CEWA system, it is recommended that CEWA engage in further research about primary SLTs.

The seventh recommendation pertains to the design of CEWA's Aspiring Principals Program and the induction of beginning principals. Using this research as a starting point, the researcher recommends that these programs provide further guidance on how to select, develop, build and review an effective SLT.

The eighth and final recommendation pertains to tertiary institutions. Some tertiary institutions provide post-graduate studies of educational leadership that contribute to developing principals and SLT members. The researcher recommends that tertiary institutions consider broadening their leadership curriculum to include a discussion of the role of effective SLTs in schools.

6.10 Conclusion

This study sought to understand the characteristics of SLTs in three high-performing CCSS. In addition, insights were sought into the perceptions of principals, SLT members and middle leaders regarding the characteristics that enhance and inhibit SLTs. Insight was also sought into the role of the principal in the SLT and resources and professional learning that would support the development of SLTs.

The study found that principals, SLT members and middle leaders agreed that the characteristics supporting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing CCSS were positive relationships, shared leadership, emotional intelligence, prioritising vision and strategy, effective communication, availability to middle leaders, an improvement mindset, and unity in the face of challenging events. The study found principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceived several characteristics that inhibited the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing CCSS. These included: excessive workload, interpersonal strain, poor communication and a lack of availability to middle leaders. This study developed insight into the resources principals, SLT members, and middle leaders perceived could enhance SLT. These resources and professional learning included: team professional learning, retreats, role-focused professional development for individual

SLT members, networking and high-quality professional learning. The study found that principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceived the principal's role in the SLT similarly. They saw the principal as a leadership coach, team builder, visionary, peacekeeper and faith leader. The study synthesised its results by developing a high-performing SLT model. The high-performing SLT model could be shared with all CEWA stakeholders whose work contributes to developing SLTs.

6.11 Personal Impact Statement

The experience of researching SLTs, and learning about their successes and struggles, has had a powerful impact on me personally and professionally. This research has given me a much more nuanced understanding of the importance of relationships in teams and the power of effective leadership. The study has also changed my understanding of leadership and helped me appreciate the complexity of the principal's role in CCSS.

I began this research wondering if the team was more important than the principal. I end it wondering if that was the wrong question, as the principal and the SLT depend on one another. The principal builds the context for the SLT to flourish, and SLT helps the principal achieve their mandate. As a result of this study, I have come to appreciate Eastwood's (2022) view that the primary function of a leader is to take care of their team and weave the team's talents together to achieve worthwhile goals. I hope this study, and the eight recommendations presented above, provide meaningful guidance to all CEWA stakeholders involved in the future growth and development of SLTs.

6.12 Addendum

The thesis has had a small but meaningful impact on the profession. In the context of leadership development at CEWA, some consultants have started to pay more attention to teams rather than individual leaders. As a leadership consultant, the researcher now works with several SLTs in secondary and primary settings. The researcher also works to develop teams in the CEWA central office. The researcher has presented the study's results to senior leaders in CEWA. Some of these results have informed modest changes in how CEWA examines a school's improvement journey. Some CEWA school improvement advisors are paying more attention to the role of the SLT in driving school improvement. The CEWA leadership framework

has also been adjusted to emphasise the role of leaders in developing teams. The researcher has also shared some aspects of this research nationally, presenting results at the National Catholic Education Conference in Melbourne in 2022 to approximately 200 delegates. Some Catholic Dioceses across Australia have expressed interest in the researcher's work on SLTs. One tertiary institution is interested in the study and the possibility of including a focus on SLTs in its postgraduate courses on educational leadership.

References

- Abbott, I., & Bush, T. (2013). Establishing and maintaining high-performing leadership teams: A primary perspective. *Education 3-13*, 41(6), 586-602. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004279.2011.611813>
- Adair, J. (2001). *The leadership of Jesus and its legacy today*. Canterbury Press.
- Alharahsheh, H., & Pius, A. (2020). A review of key paradigms: Positivism VS interpretivism. *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2(3), 39-43.
- Alliger, G., Cerasoli, C., Tannenbaum, S., & Vessey, W. (2015). Team resilience: How teams flourish under pressure. *Organizational dynamics*.
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2023a). *National, territory and state population*. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/latest-release>
- Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2023b). *Regional population*. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population/latest-release>
- Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority. (2015). *What does the ICSEA value mean?* Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority. https://docs.acara.edu.au/resources/About_icsea_2014.pdf
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2011). *Australian professional standard for principals and the leadership profiles*. Education Services Australia.
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2023). *About us*. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/about-aitsl>
- Avenell, K. (2011a). Keys to leadership: Creating capacity in leadership teams. *Australian Educational Leader*, 33(4), 43.
- Avenell, K. (2011b). Keys to leadership: Teams-creating songlines. *Australian Educational Leader*, 33(3), 39.
- Baker, T. (2021). *Winning teams: The eight characteristics of high performing teams*. WINNERS-AT-WORK.
- Bang, H., & Midelfart, T. (2021). *Effective management teams and organizational behavior: A research-based model for team development*. Taylor & Francis Group.
- Barnett, K., & McCormick, J. (2012). Leadership and team dynamics in senior executive leadership teams. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 40(6), 653-671. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143212456909>

- Bass, B., & Stogdill, R. (1990). *Bass & Stogdill's handbook of leadership: Theory, research, and managerial applications*. Free Press.
- Bastian, B., Jetten, J., Thai, H., & Steffens, N. (2018). Shared adversity increases team creativity through fostering supportive interaction. *Frontiers in Psychology, 9*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2018.02309>
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The qualitative report, 13*(4), 544-559.
- Beausaert, S., Froehlich, D. E., Riley, P., & Gallant, A. (2023). What about school principals' well-being? The role of social capital. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 51*(2), 405-421. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143221991853>
- Bell, L. (1992). *Managing teams in secondary schools*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203035566>
- Bell, L. (2002). Staff teams and their management. In M. Crawford, L. Kydd, & C. Riches (Eds.), *Leadership and teams in educational management*. Open University Press.
- Benoliel, P. (2021). A team-based perspective for school improvement: The mediating role of school management teams. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness, 14*(2), 442-470. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2020.1849481>
- Benoliel, P., & Berkovich, I. (2017). There is no “T” in school improvement: The missing team perspective. *International Journal of Educational Management, 31*(7), 922-929. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-04-2016-0069>
- Blanchard, K. (2022). *Ken Blanchard on servant leadership* [Linkedin Learning Online course].
- Blanchard, K., & Hodges, P. (2005). *Lead like Jesus: Lessons from the greatest leadership role model of all time*. Thomas Nelson.
- Boudett, K., & Lockwood, M. (2019). The power of team norms. *Educational Leadership, 76*(9), 12-17. <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/the-power-of-team-norms>
- Braverman, M., & Arnold, M. (2008). An evaluator's balancing act: Making decisions about methodological rigor. *New Directions for Evaluation, 2008*(120), 71-86.
- Bryant, D., Walker, A., Wong, Y., Adames, A., & Katyal, K. (2018). *A distributed perspective on middle leadership in International Baccalaureate continuum schools in Northeast Asia*. <https://ibo.org/globalassets/new-structure/research/pdfs/middle-leadership-final-report-en.pdf>

- Burns, J. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper.
- Bush, T., Abbott, I., Glover, D., Goodall, J., & Smith, R. (2012). *Establishing and developing high performing leadership teams*. National College for School Leadership.
- Bush, T., Bell, L., & Middlewood, D. (Eds.). (2019). *Principles of educational leadership and management*. SAGE.
- Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2012). Distributed leadership in action: Leading high-performing leadership teams in English schools. *School Leadership & Management*, 32(1), 21-36. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2011.642354>
- Caldwell, B. (1993). Decentralising the management of Australia's schools. A discussion paper. In *National Industry Education Forum*.
- Caldwell, B., & Spinks, J. (1992). *Leading the self-managing school*. The Falmer Press.
- Campbell, C., & Proctor, H. (2014). *A history of Australian schooling*. Allen & Unwin.
- Campbell, J., & van Nieuwerburgh, C. (2018). *The leader's guide to coaching in school: Creating conditions for effective learning*. Corwin.
- Cardno, C. (1999). Taking the team by the tail: An examination of the potency and demands of team contribution to an organisational learning culture.
- Cardno, C. (2002). Team learning: Opportunities and challenges for school leaders. *School Leadership & Management*, 22(2), 211-223.
- Cardno, C., & Tetzlaff, K. (2017). Tracing the stages of senior leadership team development in New Zealand primary schools: Insights and issues. *MOJEM: Malaysian Online Journal of Educational Management*, 5(3), 64-78.
- Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia. (2008). *Leadership framework for Catholic schools in Western Australia*
- Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia. (2009). *The mandate of the Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia 2009-2015*. Catholic Education Centre. <https://www.cewa.edu.au/publication/bishops-mandate-2009-2015/>
- Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia. (2019). *Strategic Directions: 2019-2023*.
- Catholic Education Western Australia. (2020). *System overview*.
- Catholic Education Western Australia. (2021a). *Catholic principal duties and responsibilities*. Catholic Education Western Australia.
- Catholic Education Western Australia. (2021b). *Everyone leads: A whole system leadership framework*. Catholic Education Western Australia.

- Catholic Education Western Australia. (2021c). *Governance*. Catholic Education Western Australia. <https://www.cewa.edu.au/about-us/governance/>
- Catholic Education Western Australia. (2021d). *Quality Catholic Education*
- Catholic Education Western Australia. (2022). *Quality Catholic Education School Review (QCESR) guidelines*. Catholic Education Western Australia.
- Catholic Education Western Australia. (2023a). *About us*. <https://www.cewa.edu.au/about-us/>
- Catholic Education Western Australia. (2023b). *Catholic Education Western Australia Limited policies*. <https://policy.cewa.edu.au/preamble/>
- Catholic Education Western Australia. (2023c). *Our history*. <https://www.cewa.edu.au/about-us/cewa/our-history/>
- Catholic Education Western Australia Limited. (2019). *Constitution*. <https://www.cewa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Constitution-of-Catholic-Education-Western-Australia-Limited-1.pdf>
- Caudal, S. (2022). Australian Secondary Schools and the Teacher Crisis: Understanding Teacher Shortages and Attrition. *Education and Society*, 40(2), 23-39.
- Chapman, D., Dethmer, J., & Warner Klemp, K. (2014). *The 15 commitments of conscious Leadership: A new paradigm for sustainable success*. Conscious Leadership Group.
- Chapman, M., Lines, R., Crane, M., Ducker, K., Ntoumanis, N., Peeling, P., Parker, S., Quested, E., Temby, P., & Thøgersen-Ntoumani, C. (2020). Team resilience: A scoping review of conceptual and empirical work. *Work & Stress*, 34(1), 57-81.
- Chen, J., & Guo, W. (2018). Emotional intelligence can make a difference: The impact of principals' emotional intelligence on teaching strategy mediated by instructional leadership. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 48(1), 82-105. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143218781066>
- Clark, T. (2020). *The 4 stages of psychological safety: Defining the path to inclusion and innovation*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Cole, P. (2006). The leadership team charter: A strategy for strengthening school leadership. *Australian Educational Leader*, 28(2), 10-13.
- Collie, R. (2021). COVID-19 and teachers' somatic burden, stress, and emotional exhaustion: Examining the role of principal leadership and workplace buoyancy. *Aera Open*, 7(1), 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332858420986187>
- Collins, J. (2009). *Good to great: Why some companies make the leap and others don't*. SAGE.

- Corrigan, J., & Merry, M. (2022). Principal leadership in a time of change. *Frontiers in Education*, 305. <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2022.897620>
- Coutu, D. (2013). Why teams don't work: An interview with J. Richard Hackman. In Harvard Business Review (Ed.), *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Teams*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Covey, S. (2004). *The seven habits of highly effective people: Powerful lessons in personal change*. Simon and Schuster.
- Coyle, D. (2009). *The talent code: Unlocking the secret of skill in maths, art, music, sport, and just about everything else*. Random House.
- Coyle, D. (2018). *The culture code: The secrets of highly successful groups*. Bantam.
- Coyle, D. (2022). *The culture playbook: 60 highly effective actions to help your group succeed*. Bantam Books.
- Cranston, N., & Ehrich, L. (2004). Developing senior management teams in schools: Can micropolitics help? *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 32(1), 21-31.
- Cranston, N., & Ehrich, L. (2005). Enhancing the effectiveness of senior management teams in schools. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 33(1), 79-91.
- Cranston, N., & Ehrich, L. (2009a). *Australian school leadership today*. Australian Academic Press.
- Cranston, N., & Ehrich, L. (2009b). Senior management teams in schools: Understanding their dynamics, enhancing their effectiveness. *Leading and Managing*, 15(1), 14-25.
- Creswell, J., & Creswell, D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. SAGE.
- Creswell, J., & Poth, C. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*. SAGE.
- Crook, S., & Turkington, M. (2018). High performing Catholic schools: Two case studies. *Leading and Managing*, 24(2), 74-91.
- Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Routledge.
- Dalglis, C., & Miller, P. (2016). *Leadership: Modernising our perspective*. Tilde Publishing and Distribution
- Day, C., Sammons, P., Hopkins, D., Harris, A., Leithwood, K., Gu, Q., Brown, E., Ahtaridou, E., & Kington, A. (2009). The impact of school leadership on pupil outcomes. *Final report*.

- Delizonna, L. (2017). High-performing teams need psychological safety. Here's how to create it. *Harvard Business Review*, 8, 1-5.
- Deloitte. (2016). *Transitioning to the future of work and the workplace: Embracing digital culture, tools, and approaches*.
<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/global/Documents/HumanCapital/gx-hc-us-cons-transitioning-to-the-future-of-work-and-the-workplace.pdf>
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (Fifth edition. ed.). SAGE.
- DeWitt, P. (2021). *Collective leader efficacy: Strengthening instructional leadership teams*. Corwin Press.
- DeWitt, P. (2022). Collective leader efficacy. *Australian Educational Leader*, 44(3), 64-67.
- Dikko, M. (2016). Establishing construct validity and reliability: Pilot testing of a qualitative interview for research in Takaful (Islamic insurance). *The qualitative report*, 21(3), 521-529.
- Dimmock, C. (Ed.). (1993). *School-based management and school effectiveness*. Routledge.
- Donohoo, J., Hattie, J., & Eells, R. (2018). The power of collective efficacy. *Educational Leadership*, 75(6), 40-44.
- Donohoo, J., & Katz, S. (2019). What drives collective efficacy? *Educational leadership* 76(9), 24-29.
- Dosen, A., & Rieckhoff, B. (Eds.). (2016). *Catholic school leadership*. Information Age Publishing.
- Drach-Zahavy, A., & Somech, A. (2002). Team heterogeneity and its relationship with team support and team effectiveness. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 40(1), 44-66. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230210415643>
- Druskat, V., & Wolf, S. (2013). Building the emotional intelligence of groups. In Harvard Business Review (Ed.), *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Teams*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Duhigg, C. (2016). What Google learned from its quest to build the perfect team. *The New York Times Magazine*, 26, 2016.
- Dyer, W., & Dyer, J. (2020). *Beyond team building: How to build high performing teams and the culture to support them*. Wiley.
- Earley, P., Weindling, D., & Ebrary. (2004). *Understanding school leadership*. Paul Chapman.

- Eastwood, O. (2022). *Belonging: Unlock your potential with the ancient code of togetherness*. Quercus.
- Ebersöhn, L., Loots, T., Mampane, R., Omidire, F., Malan-Van Rooyen, M., Sefotho, M., & Nthontho, M. (2018). An indigenous psychology perspective on psychosocial support in Southern Africa as collective, networking, and pragmatic support. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology*, 28(5), 332-347.
- Edmondson, A. (2018). *The fearless organization: Creating psychological safety in the workplace for learning, innovation, and growth*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Edwards, D. (1989). *Called to be church in Australia: An approach to the renewal of local churches*. St Paul Publications.
- Egberts, D. (2010). *Writing on the Spirit: An exploration of the role of senior leadership teams in enhancing the mission integrity of selected Catholic schools in the Mercy tradition*. [Doctoral Thesis, Australian Catholic University].
- Felps, W., Mitchell, T., & Byington, E. (2006). How, when, and why bad apples spoil the barrel: Negative group members and dysfunctional groups. *Research in organizational behavior*, 27, 175-222. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-3085\(06\)27005-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0191-3085(06)27005-9)
- Flack, C., Walker, L., Bickerstaff, A., Earle, H., & Johnson, C. (2021). *Principal perspectives on the impact of COVID-19: Pathways toward equity in Australian schools* (Pivot Professional Learning, Issue. https://docs.pivotpl.com/research/COVID-19/Pivot_Principal+Perspectives+on+the+Impact+of+COVID-19+Whitepaper_February+2021.pdf
- Franz, T. (2012). *Group dynamics and team interventions: Understanding and improving team performance*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Fullan, M. (2019). *Nuance: Why some leaders succeed and others fail*. Corwin.
- Fullan, M., & Hargreaves, A. (1991). *What's worth fighting for? Working together for your school*. The Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement.
- Fullan, M., & Quinn, J. (2016). *Coherence: The right drivers in action for schools, districts, and systems*. Corwin.
- Fyfe, M., & Cook, H. (2019). The new school bullies aren't children – they're parents. *The Good Weekend*.
- Galbally, M., Himmerich, H., Senaratne, S., Fitzgerald, P., Frost, J., Woods, N., & Dickinson, J. (2022). Management of anorexia nervosa in pregnancy: A systematic and state-of-the-art review. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 9(5), 402-412. [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(22\)00031-1](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(22)00031-1)

- Gallin, L. (2022). *What does it mean to be an assistant principal in Catholic primary schools in Western Australia? An exploratory instrumental case study*. [Doctoral thesis, The University of Notre Dame]. <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses/352>
- Glasson, S. (2014). *Developing tomorrow's school leaders: The Western Australian Catholic Education Aspiring Principals Program*. [Doctoral Thesis, The University of Notre Dame Australia]. <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1106&context=theses>
- Goleman, D. (1996). *Emotional intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Gonski, D., Arcus, T., Boston, K., Gould, V., Johnson, W., O'Brien, L., Perry, L.-A., & Roberts, M. (2018). *Through growth to achievement: Report of the review to achieve educational excellence in Australian schools*. Commonwealth of Australia. <http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/456059>.
- Goodall, J. (2013). Recruit for attitude, train for skills: Creating high performing leadership teams. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 41(2), 199-213.
- Gratton, L., & Erickson, T. (2013). Eight ways to build collaborative teams. In *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Teams*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Greenleaf, R. (1977). *Servant leadership: A journey into the nature of legitimate power and greatness*. Paulist Press.
- Greenleaf, R. (1998). Servant leadership. In *Insights on leadership: Service, stewardship, spirit, and servant-leadership*. John Willey & Sons.
- Gronn, P. (2000). A realist view of leadership. *Practising Administrator*, 22(1), 4-18.
- Gronn, P. (2003). *The new work of educational leaders: Changing leadership practice in an era of school reform*. SAGE.
- Grootenboer, P., Edwards-Groves, C., & Rönnerman, K. (2020). *Middle leadership in schools: A practical guide for leading learning*. Routledge.
- Gurr, D., Drysdale, L., & Mulford, B. (2005). Successful principal leadership: Australian case studies. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 43(6), 539-551. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230510625647>
- Hackman, J. R. (1990). *Groups that work (and those that don't): Creating conditions for effective teamwork*. Jossey-Bass.
- Hackman, J. R. (2012). From causes to conditions in group research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 33(3), 428-444. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.1774>
- Hackman, R. (2002). *Leading teams: Setting the stage for great performances*. Harvard Business School.

- Hackman, R., Wageman, R., & Fisher, C. (2009). Leading teams when the time is right: Finding the best moments to act. *Organizational dynamics*, 38(3). <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:4412633>
- Hall, V., & Wallace, M. (1996). Let the team take the strain: Lessons from research into senior management teams in secondary schools. *School Organisation*, 16(3), 297-308.
- Hallinger, P. (2005). Instructional leadership and the school principal: A passing fancy that refuses to fade away. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 4(3), 221-239. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700760500244793>
- Hammad, W., & Shah, S. (2018). Leading faith schools in a secular society: Challenges facing head teachers of Muslim schools in the United Kingdom. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 47(6), 943-959. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143218775429>
- Harari, Y. (2014). *Sapiens: A brief history of humankind*. Random House.
- Hargreaves, A. (2019). Teacher collaboration: 30 years of research on its nature, forms, limitations and effects. *Teachers and Teaching*, 25(5), 603-621.
- Harris, A. (2008). Distributed leadership: According to the evidence. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 46(2), 172-188. <https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230810863253>
- Harris, A. (2013). Distributed leadership: Friend or foe? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 41(5), 545-554.
- Harris, A. (2016). *Distributed leadership matters: Perspectives, practicalities, and potential*. Corwin. <http://sk.sagepub.com/Books/distributed-leadership-matters>
- Harvey, M. (1987). Some implications of the 'better schools' report for school management in Western Australia. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 12(1), 1-12.
- Hattie, J. (2015a). High-Impact Leadership. *Educational Leadership*, 72(5), 36-40.
- Hattie, J. (2015b). *What works best in education: The politics of collaborative expertise*. Pearson. https://www.pearson.com/content/dam/corporate/global/pearson-dot-com/files/hattie/150526_ExpertiseWEB_V1.pdf
- Hattie, J., & Smith, R. (2020). *10 mindframes for leaders: The visible learning approach to school success*. Corwin Press.
- Heffernan, A. (2018). *The principal and school improvement: Theorising discourse, policy, and practice*. Springer.
- Hiatt, B. (2022, March 29). Covid havoc hits schools. *The West Australian*.

- Hill, S. (2019). Teams. In *Leadership: Theory and practice*. SAGE.
- Howley, D. (2022). Experiences of teaching and learning in K-12 physical education during COVID-19: an international comparative case study. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 27(6), 608-625.
- Humphrey, J., & Damian, H. (2021). *High performance: Lessons from the best on becoming your best*. Penguin.
- Hutton, F. (2022). Inspiring hope leading our future: A new school leadership paradigm. Retrieved 17 July 2022, from <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/inspiring-hope-leading-our-future-new-school-paradigm-fiona-hutton/?trackingId=99EQRp2vTA%2BahYYM7tIJ2A%3D%3D>
- Isaacs, D. (2022). Perks of working for Google: A playground for grownups. <https://candor.co/articles/tech-careers/perks-of-working-for-google-a-playground-for-grownups>
- Janis, I. (1983). *Groupthink*. Houghton Mifflin Boston.
- Janis, I. (1991). Groupthink. In E. Griffin (Ed.), *First Look at communication theory* (pp. 235 - 246). McGrawHill.
- Kakabadse, A., Bank, J., & Vinnicombe, S. (2004). Teamworking. In *Working in organisations*. Routledge
- Kapitulik, E., & MacDonald, J. (2019). *The program: Lessons from elite military units for creating and sustaining high performance leaders and teams*. Wiley.
- Katzenbach, J., & Smith, D. (1993). The discipline of teams. *Harvard Business Review*, 83(7), 162. <https://hbr.org/1993/03/the-discipline-of-teams-2>
- Katzenbach, J., & Smith, D. (1993). *The wisdom of teams: Creating the high-performance organization*. Mckinsey & Company.
- Katzenbach, J., & Smith, D. (2013). The discipline of teams. In *HBR's 10 must reads on teams*. Harvard Business Review.
- Keane, R., & Riley, D. (1997). *Quality Catholic schools: Challenges for leadership as Catholic education approaches the third millennium*. Archdiocese of Brisbane-Catholic Education.
- Kirtman, L. (2014). *Leadership and teams: The missing piece of the educational reform puzzle*. Pearson
- Klenowski, V., & Wyatt-Smith, C. (2012). The impact of high stakes testing: The Australian story. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, 19(1), 65-79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594x.2011.592972>

- Korstjens, I., & Moser, A. (2017). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 2: Context, research questions and designs. *European Journal of General Practice*, 23(1), 274-279. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375090>
- Kozlowski, S., & Ilgen, D. (2006). Enhancing the effectiveness of work groups and teams. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 7(3), 77-124. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1529-1006.2006.00030.x>
- Lavery, S. (2011). Transactional, transformative and a servant! *Principal Matters*.
- Lavery, S. (2012). The Catholic school principal: A transcendent leader? *Journal of Catholic School Studies*, 84(1).
- Lavery, S., & Hine, G. (2013). Catholic school principals: Promoting student leadership. *Journal of Catholic Education*, 17(1), 41-66.
- Leadership, N. C. f. S. (2009). School leadership today.
- Lechner, A., & Mortlock, T. (2022). How to create psychological safety in virtual teams. *Organizational dynamics*, 51(2), 1-9.
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2008). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership. *School leadership and management*, 28(1), 27-42.
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5-22.
- Lencioni, P. (2002). *The five dysfunctions of a team*. Jossey-Bass.
- Li, S. H., Beames, J. R., Newby, J. M., Maston, K., Christensen, H., & Werner-Seidler, A. (2022). The impact of COVID-19 on the lives and mental health of Australian adolescents. *European child & adolescent psychiatry*, 31(9), 1465-1477.
- Lipscombe, K., Tindall-Ford, S., & Lamanna, J. (2021). School middle leadership: A systematic review. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 51(2), 270–288.
- Louis, C., Keith, M., & Lawrence, M. (2011). *Research methods in education*. Routledge.
- Macklin, P., & Zbar, V. (2020). *Driving school improvement: Practical strategies and tools*. ACER Press.
- Marzano, R., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. ASCD.
- Miles, M., Huberman, M., & Saldana, J. (2020). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (4 ed.). SAGE.

- Ministry of Education. (1987). *Better schools in Western Australia: A programme for improvement*
<https://web.education.unimelb.edu.au/curriculum/policies/project/Reports/download/WA-1995-PearceBetterSchoolsReport-1987.pdf>
- Morgan, D. (2019). *Basic and advanced focus groups*. SAGE.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781071814307>
- Ng Foo Seong, D. (2019). Instructional leadership. In T. Townsend (Ed.), *Instructional leadership and leadership for learning in schools: Understanding theories of leading*. Springer International Publishing.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-23736-3_2
- Noble, H., & Heale, R. (2019). Triangulation in research, with examples. *Evidence Based Nursing*, 22(3), 67. <https://doi.org/10.1136/ebnurs-2019-103145>
- Northouse, P. (2019). *Leadership: Theory and practice*. Sage
- Northouse, P., & Lee, M. (2019). *Leadership case studies in education*. Sage.
- Nsiah, J., & Walker, K. (2013). *The servant leadership role of Catholic high school principals*. SensePublishers. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-6209-058-3>
- O'Donoghue, T. (2019). *Planning your qualitative research project: An introduction to interpretivist research in education*. Routledge.
- O'Neill, M., & Glasson, S. (2019). Revitalising professional learning for experienced principals: Energy versus ennui. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 47(6), 887-908.
- Oswald, L. (1996). *Work teams in schools*.
<https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/3325/digest103.pdf?sequence=1>
- Outtrim, M. (2022). *The personal and professional experiences of female principals in Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) composite and secondary schools*. [Doctoral thesis, The University of Western Australia].
<https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/theses/344/>
- Passer, M., & Smith, R. (2021). *Psychology: The science of mind and behaviour*. McGraw Hill.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015a). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. SAGE.
- Patton, M. Q. (2015b). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods: Integrating theory and practice*. SAGE.
- Pendal, P. (2008). *Continuity in change: The journey of Catholic education in Western Australia from 1843 to 2008*. Victor Publishing.

- Pentland, A. (2013). The new science of building great teams. In *HBR's 10 Must Reads on Teams*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Phillippi, J., & Lauderdale, J. (2018). A guide to field notes for qualitative research: Context and conversation. *Qualitative health research*, 28(3), 381-388.
- Porath, C. L., Foulk, T., & Erez, A. (2015). How incivility hijacks performance: It robs cognitive resources, increases dysfunctional behavior, and infects team dynamics and functioning. *Organizational dynamics*, 44(4), 258-265. <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2015.09.002>
- Power, M. (2019). Teamwork by design. *Educational Leadership*, 76(9).
- Punch, K. (2009). *Introduction to research methods in education*. SAGE.
- Rajendran, N., Watt, H. M., & Richardson, P. W. (2020). Teacher burnout and turnover intent. *The Australian Educational Researcher*, 47(3), 477-500.
- Ridden, P. (1992). *School management: A team approach*. Ashton Scholastic.
- Ridden, P., & De Nobile, J. (2012). *Keys to school leadership*. Acer Press.
- Rincón-Gallardo, S., & Fullan, M. (2016). Essential features of effective networks in education. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, 1(1), 5-22.
- Robinson, V. (2018). Excellence in educational leadership: Practices, capabilities, and virtues that foster improved student outcomes In T. Bush, Bell, L & Middlewood, D (Ed.), *Principles of educational leadership and management*. SAGE.
- Rost, J. (1997). Moving from individual to relationship: A postindustrial paradigm of leadership. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 4(4), 3-16.
- Ryan, P. (2015). *Leadership in education: Learning from experience*. Halstead Press.
- Saldana, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. SAGE.
- Saleem, F., Zhang, Y. Z., Gopinath, C., & Adeel, A. (2020). Impact of servant leadership on performance: The mediating role of affective and cognitive trust. *SAGE Open*, 10(1), 1-16. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244019900562>
- Sandahl, P., & Phillips, A. (2019). *Teams unleashed: How to release the power and human potential of work teams*. Hachette.
- Sayce, D. (2014). *What are the professional and personal needs of beginning Western Australian Catholic school principals during the first four years of their appointment?* [Doctoral Thesis, University of Notre Dame Australia]. <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1104&context=theses>
- Schwandt, T. (2015). *The SAGE dictionary of qualitative inquiry*. SAGE.
- Scott, J. (2014). *A matter of record: Documentary sources in social research*. John Wiley & Sons.

- Scott, K. (2019). *Radical candor: Be a kick-ass boss without losing your humanity*. St. Martin's Press.
- Searby, L., Browne-Ferrigno, T., & Chih-hsuan, W. (2017). Assistant principals: Their readiness as instructional leaders. *Leadership and Policy in Schools, 16*(3), 397-430. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2016.1197281>
- See, S.-M., Kidson, P., Marsh, H., & Dicke, T. (2022). *The Australian principal occupational health, safety and wellbeing survey*. Sydney: Institute for Positive Psychology and Education, Australian Catholic University.
- Shore, K., & Walshaw, M. (2018). Assistant/deputy principals: What are their perceptions of their role? *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 21*(3), 310-326.
- Sinclair, A. (1995). The seduction of the self-managed team and the reinvention of the team-as-a-group. *Leading and Managing, 1*(1), 44-62.
- Sofield, L., & Kuhn, D. (1995). *The collaborative leader: Listening to the wisdom of God's people*. Ave Maria Press.
- Somech, A., & Drach-Zahavy, A. (2007). Schools as team-based organizations: A structure-process-outcomes approach. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice, 11*(4), 305.
- Somech, A., & Freedman, I. (2021). Translating teamwork into school effectiveness: A systematic review of two decades of research. *European Journal of Educational Management, 4*(2), 109-127.
- Sparks, D. (2013). Strong teams, strong schools: Teacher-to-teacher collaboration creates synergy that benefits students. *Journal of Staff Development, 34*(2), 28-30.
- Stake, R. (2010). *Qualitative Research: Studying How Things Work*. Guilford Publications.
<http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/unda/detail.action?docID=479606>
- Stott, K., & Walker, A. (1999). Extending teamwork in schools: Support and organisational consistency. *Team Performance Management, 5*(2), 50-59.
- The State of New South Wales. (2022). *2022 flood inquiry: Volume one: Summary report*. https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/noindex/2022-08/VOLUME_ONE_Summary.pdf
- Thomas, D. (2009). *Working together is success: How successful headteachers build and develop effective leadership teams*. National College for School Leadership.

- Thomas, V. (1997). The leadership context for principals of Catholic schools In J. McMahon, H. Neidhart, & Judith Chapman (Eds.), *Leading the Catholic school*. Spectrum publications.
- Thompson, R., & Kusy, M. (2021). Has the COVID pandemic strengthened or weakened health care teams? A field guide to healthy workforce best practices. *Nursing Administration Quarterly*, 45(2), 135-141.
- Timperley, H., & Robertson, J. (2012). Establishing platforms for leadership and learning In H. Timperley & J. Robertson (Eds.), *Leadership and learning* SAGE.
- Tobin, G., & Begley, C. (2004). Methodological rigour within a qualitative framework. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 48(4), 388-396.
- Tuckman, B. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin* 63(6), 384.
- Wageman, R., Nunes, D., Burruss, J., & Hackman, R. (2008). *Senior leadership teams: What it takes to make them great*. Harvard Business Review Press.
- Walker, A. (1994). Teams in schools: Looking below the surface. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 8(4), 38-44.
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/09513549410062498>
- Walker, A., Bryant, D., & Lee, M. (2013). International patterns in principal preparation: Commonalities and variations in pre-service programmes. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 41(4), 405-434.
- Walker, S. (2018). *The captain class: A new theory of leadership*. Random House.
- Wallace, M. (2002). Modelling distributed leadership and management effectiveness: Primary school senior management teams in England and Wales. *School effectiveness and school improvement*, 13(2), 163-186.
- Wallace, M., & Hall, V. (1994a). *Inside the SMT: Teamwork in secondary school management*. Paul Chapman Publishing.
- Wallace, M., & Hall, V. (1994b, April 4-8, 1994). *Team approaches to leadership in secondary schools*. The Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.
- Walsh, B. (2009). *The score takes care of itself: My philosophy of leadership*. Penguin.
- Western Australia Treasury Corporation. (2023). Overview of Western Australia.
<https://www.watc.wa.gov.au/western-australia/why-invest-in-wa/>
- Whitaker, T., & Fiore, D. (2016). *Dealing with difficult parents* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315675558>

- Whitmore, J. (2017). *Coaching for performance: A practical guide to growing your own skills*. Nicholas Brealey.
- Wynn, R., & Guditus, C. (1984). *Team management: Leadership by consensus*. C.E. Merrill.
- Yin, R. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. SAGE.
- Yong, J., Park, G., & Spitzmuller, M. (2021). From the savannah to the corporate office: The evolution of Teams. *Small group research*, 52(1), 33-67.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1046496420960516>
- Zappulla, P. (2003). Issues in the development of leadership teams. *Management in education*, 17(4), 29-34.

Every reasonable attempt has been made to acknowledge the owners of copyright material. I would be pleased to hear from any copyright owner who has been omitted or incorrectly acknowledged.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Principal: Semi-structured Interview Questions

Principal: Semi-structured Interview Questions

Lead-in questions

1. Can you tell me a little about how you came to work at this school and in this SLT?
2. What do you feel are the benefits of working as an SLT?

Research question 1: What characteristics do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as supporting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing Catholic secondary schools?

3. What is the team doing when it is performing at its best?
4. Are there any routines, rituals, or meetings that your team engages in regularly?
5. How does the team evaluate its performance?
6. What role does the Catholic faith play in your participation in the team?

Research question 2: What characteristics do principals SLT members and middle leaders perceive as hindering the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing Catholic secondary schools?

7. When the team is not at its best, what might that look like?
8. How does the team deal with any conflict?

Research sub-question 3: What resources or professional learning do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs?

9. What professional learning have you received to develop as a team?
10. If CEWA could do something to support SLTs, what would you recommend?

Research sub-question 4: How do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive the principal's role in the SLT?

11. How do you see your specific role in the team?
12. How do you manage any conflict in the team?

Closing questions

13. Do you have anything you would like to say about the SLT or your role in the SLT that has not been addressed in this interview?

Appendix B

SLT Semi-structured Interview Questions



Senior Leadership Team: Semi-structured Interview Questions

Lead-in questions

1. Can you tell me a little about how you came to work at this school and in this SLT?
2. What do you feel are the benefits of working as an SLT?

Research question 1: What characteristics do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive as supporting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing Catholic secondary schools?

3. What is the team doing when it is performing at its best?
4. Are there any routines, rituals, or meetings that your team engages in regularly?
5. How does the team evaluate its performance?
6. What role does the Catholic faith play in your participation in the team?

Research question 2: What characteristics do principals SLT members and middle leaders perceive as hindering the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing Catholic secondary schools?

7. When the team is not at its best, what might that look like?
8. How does the team deal with any conflict?

Research sub-question 3: What resources or professional learning do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive will support the development of SLTs?

9. What professional learning have you received to develop as a team?
10. If CEWA could do something to support SLTs, what would you recommend?

Research sub-question 4: How do principals, SLT members and middle leaders perceive the principal's role in the SLT?

11. How do you see the principal's role in the team?
12. If the team disagrees with the principal, how is that managed?
13. What role do you think the Catholic faith plays in the principal's participation in the team?

Closing questions

14. Do you have anything you would like to say about the SLT or your role in the SLT that has not been addressed in this interview?

Appendix C

Middle Leader Focus Group Questions

Middle Leaders: Semi-structured Focus Group Questions –

Lead-in questions

1. As Middle Leaders, how do you interact with the Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

Research question 1: *What characteristics do principals and SLT members perceive as supporting the effective functioning of the SLT in high-performing Catholic secondary schools?*

3. When the SLT is performing at its best, how would you describe them?

Research question 2: *What characteristics do principals and SLT members perceive as hindering the effective functioning of the SLTs in high-performing Catholic secondary schools?*

4. When the SLT is not performing at its best, how would you describe them?

Research sub-question 3: *What resources or professional learning do principals and SLT members perceive will support the development of SLTs?*

5. What professional learning, resources, or strategies, have you observed the SLT use to develop as a team?

6. If CEWA could do something to support SLTs, what would you recommend?

Research question 4: *How do principals and SLT members perceive the principal's role in the SLT?*

7. How do you see the principal's role in the SLT?

Closing questions

8. Do you have anything you would like to say about the SLT that has not been addressed in this interview?

Appendix D

Interview Consent Forms - Principal



CONSENT FORM – PRINCIPAL

The characteristics of senior leadership teams in high-performing Western Australian Catholic composite and secondary schools

- I agree to take part in this research project.
- I have read the Information Sheet provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this study, the procedures involved and of what is expected of me.
- I understand that I will be asked to share my thoughts about the characteristics of the Senior Leadership Team at my school.
- The researcher has answered all my questions and has explained possible problems that may arise as a result of my participation in this study.
- I understand that I may withdraw from participating in the project at any time without prejudice.
- I understand that all information provided by me is treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law.
- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not disclosed.

Name of participant			
Signature of participant		Date	

- I confirm that I have provided the Information Sheet concerning this research project to the above participant, explained what participating involves and have answered all questions asked of me.

Signature of Researcher		Date	
-------------------------	--	------	--

Appendix E

Interview Consent Forms - Consent Form Senior Leadership Team



CONSENT FORM – SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM MEMBER

The characteristics of senior leadership teams in high-performing Western Australian Catholic composite and secondary schools

- I agree to take part in this research project.
- I have read the Information Sheet provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this study, the procedures involved and of what is expected of me.
- I understand that I will be asked to share my thoughts about the characteristics of the Senior Leadership Team at my school.
- The researcher has answered all my questions and has explained possible problems that may arise as a result of my participation in this study.
- I understand that I may withdraw from participating in the project at any time without prejudice.
- I understand that all information provided by me is treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law.
- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not disclosed.

Name of participant			
Signature of participant		Date	

- I confirm that I have provided the Information Sheet concerning this research project to the above participant, explained what participating involves and have answered all questions asked of me.

Signature of Researcher		Date	
-------------------------	--	------	--

Appendix F

Interview Consent Form - Consent Form Middle Leader



CONSENT FORM – MIDDLE LEADER

The characteristics of senior leadership teams in high-performing Western Australian Catholic composite and secondary schools

- I agree to take part in this research project.
- I have read the Information Sheet provided and been given a full explanation of the purpose of this study, the procedures involved and of what is expected of me.
- I understand that I will be asked to share my thoughts about the characteristics of the Senior Leadership Team at my school.
- The researcher has answered all my questions and has explained possible problems that may arise as a result of my participation in this study.
- I understand that I may withdraw from participating in the project at any time without prejudice.
- I understand that all information provided by me is treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher to a third party unless required to do so by law.
- I agree that any research data gathered for the study may be published provided my name or other identifying information is not disclosed.

Name of participant			
Signature of participant		Date	

- I confirm that I have provided the Information Sheet concerning this research project to the above participant, explained what participating involves and have answered all questions asked of me.

Signature of Researcher		Date	
-------------------------	--	------	--

Appendix G

Invitation to Participate in Research - Principal



Invitation to participate in the research

Dear Principal

I am writing to invite you to participate in my research about the characteristics of senior leadership teams (SLT) in high-performing Western Australian Catholic composite and secondary schools (WACCSS).

In today's complex schools, school leadership is more of a team game than a solo sport. Most principals do not work alone and choose to share their leadership with an experienced senior leadership team (SLT). The SLT play a vital role in leading the school, however, as a leadership phenomenon, the SLT is not well understood or researched. The purpose of this research is to address that oversight.

To undertake this research, I would like to encourage principals, SLT members and middle leaders to share their perceptions about the characteristics that enhance or inhibit the SLT. From these perceptions, collected by one-to-one interviews with SLT members, and through focus group interviews with middle leaders, I intend to provide an informed description of the characteristics of an effective SLT. These descriptions will contribute to the development of a high performing SLT model that could support other leaders, and CEWA stakeholders, to develop and improve their SLTs. Ultimately, the more effective an SLT is, the greater the impact schools can have on the development of students.

If you choose to accept this invitation, please inform me via email. I, or the liason person for me at your school, will send you an information sheet, and provide you with a consent form. Please sign the consent form and bring it to the interview. I will also explain the project and address any issues you may have. Please feel free to speak with me about any aspects of this research and its impact. My email is daniel.groenewald@my.nd.edu.au and my mobile phone number is 0437 621 516.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Groenewald

Appendix H

Invitation to Participate in Research - Senior Leadership Team Member



Invitation to participate in the research

Dear Senior Leader

I am writing to invite you to participate in my research about the characteristics of senior leadership teams (SLT) in high-performing Western Australian Catholic composite and secondary schools (WACCSS).

In today's complex schools, school leadership is more of a team game than a solo sport. Most principals do not work alone and choose to share their leadership with an experienced senior leadership team (SLT). The SLT play a vital role in leading the school, however, as a leadership phenomenon, the SLT is not well understood or researched. The purpose of this research is to address that oversight.

To undertake this research, I would like to encourage principals, SLT members and middle leaders to share their perceptions about the characteristics that enhance or inhibit the SLT. From these perceptions, collected by one-to-one interviews with SLT members, and through focus group interviews with middle leaders, I intend to provide an informed description of the characteristics of an effective SLT. These descriptions will contribute to the development of a high performing SLT model that could support other leaders, and CEWA stakeholders, to develop and improve their SLTs. Ultimately, the more effective an SLT is, the greater the impact schools can have on the development of students.

If you choose to accept this invitation, please inform me via email. I, or the liaison person for me at your school, will send you an information sheet, and provide you with a consent form. Please sign the consent form and bring it to the interview. I will also explain the project and address any issues you may have. Please feel free to speak with me about any aspects of this research and its impact. My email is daniel.groenewald@my.nd.edu.au and my mobile phone number is 0437 621 516.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Groenewald

Appendix I

Invitation to Participate in Research - Middle Leader



Invitation to participate in the research

Dear Middle Leader

I am writing to invite you to participate in my research about the characteristics of senior leadership teams (SLT) in high-performing Western Australian Catholic composite and secondary schools (WACCSS).

In today's complex schools, school leadership is more of a team game than a solo sport. Most principals do not work alone and choose to share their leadership with an experienced senior leadership team (SLT). The SLT play a vital role in leading the school, however, as a leadership phenomenon, the SLT is not well understood or researched. The purpose of this research is to address that oversight.

To undertake this research, I would like to encourage principals, SLT members and middle leaders to share their perceptions about the characteristics that enhance or inhibit the SLT. From these perceptions, collected by one-to-one interviews with SLT members, and through focus group interviews with middle leaders, I intend to provide an informed description of the characteristics of an effective SLT. These descriptions will contribute to the development of a high performing SLT model that could support other leaders, and CEWA stakeholders, to develop and improve their SLTs. Ultimately, the more effective an SLT is, the greater the impact schools can have on the development of students.

If you choose to accept this invitation, please inform me via email. I, or the liason person for me at your school, will send you an information sheet, and provide you with a consent form. Please sign the consent form and bring it to the interview. I will also explain the project and address any issues you may have. Please feel free to speak with me about any aspects of this research and its impact. My email is daniel.groenewald@my.nd.edu.au and my mobile phone number is 0437 621 516.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Groenewald

Appendix J

Research Participation Information Sheet - Principal

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – PRINCIPAL

The characteristics of senior leadership teams in high-performing Western Australian Catholic composite and secondary schools

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

The research project will investigate the characteristics of senior leadership teams (SLTs) in West Australian Catholic Composite and Secondary Schools (WACCSS). This research will help address the gap in scholarly and professional knowledge about SLTs. The objective of the research is to find out what characteristics inform SLTs in high performing schools, and to create a high-performing SLT model which could be shared with key stakeholders involved in school improvement in Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA). The perceptions of participants in this research will make a strong contribution to that model.

Who is undertaking the project?

This project is being conducted by Daniel Groenewald and will form the basis of his Doctor of Education degree at The University of Notre Dame Australia, under the supervision of Associate Professor Shane Lavery and Professor Michael O'Neill.

What will I be asked to do?

If you consent to take part in this research study, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study and what you will be asked to do. Please make sure that you ask any questions you may have and that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

An objective of the study is to describe the characteristics of SLTs through the eyes of all SLT members and various middle leaders.

Middle leaders will be asked to participate in a focus group of approximately five middle leaders for one hour at the middle leader's school. The interview will focus on middle leader perceptions of the characteristics that enhance or inhibit the SLT. The comments and response of middle leader participants will be recorded digitally, analysed, member-checked and coded for key themes regarding the characteristics of SLTs.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

There is a small foreseeable risk for you in participating in the research as the schools may be identified by readers of the research.

What are the benefits of the research project?

There are three benefits of this research project. First, presently there is no research on effective SLTs in WACCSS. The study has the potential to add to knowledge in the field. Second, there is limited recent research on SLTs in Australian schools. The study could be of interest to other SLTs from similar contexts. Third, many stakeholders in Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA), for example, the CEWA Executive, the Leadership and Employee Services Directorate, the Teaching and Learning Directorate, principals and their SLTs, are engaged in school improvement, leadership, and team development. This research could assist these stakeholders in developing more effective SLTs across CEWA.

What if I change my mind?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation at any time without giving a reason and with no negative consequences. However, if you have completed the focus group interview your data cannot be withdrawn because it is difficult to extract your individual data from group recordings and you will not be identified in the recording.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?

Information gathered about you will be held in strict confidence. This confidence will only be broken if required by law. Your data will be de-identified and kept by the researcher on a password protected computer and be shared only with the researchers and his two supervisors, Associate Professor Shane Lavery and Professor Michael O'Neill. Your data will be used to answer the research question. In the final thesis submission, some participant data may be quoted but it would be de-identified to protect the identity of participants.

Once the study is completed, circa 2024, the data will be stored securely in the Faculty of Education, Philosophy and Theology at The University of Notre Dame Australia for at least a period of five years. The results of the study will be published as a thesis and peer reviewed journal articles.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?

Once the data from this study has been analysed, an executive summary of the findings will be shared with all participants. You can expect to receive this feedback at the project's completion in 2024 and you will be invited to a presentation of the data around that time.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact Daniel Groenewald at daniel.groenewald@my.nd.edu.au or on 0437 621 516. Alternatively, you can contact Associate Professor Shane Lavery at 9433 0173 or shane.lavery@nd.edu.au. We are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study.

What if I have a concern or complaint?

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame Australia (Reference Number: 2021-089F). If you have a concern or complaint regarding the ethical conduct of this research project and would like to speak to an independent person, please contact Notre Dame's Research Ethics Officer at (+61 8) 9433 0943 or research@nd.edu.au. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

How do I sign up to participate?

If you are happy to participate, please sign both copies of the consent form, keep one for yourself and email the other to me.

Thank you for your time. This sheet is for you to keep.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Groenewald, Associate Professor Shane Lavery, Professor Michael O'Neill

Appendix K

Research Participation Information Sheet - Senior Leadership Team Member



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – Senior Leadership Team Members

The characteristics of senior leadership teams in high-performing Western Australian Catholic composite and secondary schools

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

The research project will investigate the characteristics of senior leadership teams (SLTs) in West Australian Catholic Composite and Secondary Schools (WACCSS). This research will help address the gap in scholarly and professional knowledge about SLTs. The objective of the research is to find out what characteristics inform SLTs in high performing schools, and to create a high-performing SLT model which could be shared with key stakeholders involved in school improvement in Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA). The perceptions of participants in this research will make a strong contribution to that model.

Who is undertaking the project?

This project is being conducted by Daniel Groenewald and will form the basis of his Doctor of Education degree at The University of Notre Dame Australia, under the supervision of Associate Professor Shane Lavery and Professor Michael O'Neill.

What will I be asked to do?

If you consent to take part in this research study, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study and what you will be asked to do. Please make sure that you ask any questions you may have and that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

An objective of the study is to describe the characteristics of SLTs through the eyes of all SLT members and various middle leaders.

SLT members will be asked to participate in a one-hour, one-to-one semi-structured interview at the SLT member's school. The interviews will focus on the SLT member's perception of the characteristics that enhance or inhibit the SLT. The comments and response of SLT participant will be recorded digitally, analysed, member-checked and coded for key themes regarding the characteristics that enhance or inhibit the SLTs.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

There is no foreseeable risk in you participating in this research project.

What are the benefits of the research project?

There are three benefits of this research project. First, presently there is no research on effective SLTs in WACCSS. The study has the potential to add to knowledge in the field. Second, there is limited recent research on SLTs in Australian schools. The study could be of interest to other SLTs from similar contexts. Third, many stakeholders in Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA), for example, the CEWA Executive, the Leadership and Employee Services Directorate, the Teaching and Learning Directorate, principals and their SLTs, are engaged in school improvement, leadership, and team development. This research could assist these stakeholders in developing more effective SLTs across CEWA.

What if I change my mind?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation at any time without giving a reason and with no negative consequences. If you do decide to change your mind then your data will be withdrawn from the study.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?

Information gathered about you will be held in strict confidence. This confidence will only be broken if required by law. Your data will be de-identified and kept by the researcher on a password protected computer and be shared only with Daniel Groenewald and his two supervisors, Associate Professor Shane Lavery and Professor Michael O'Neill. Your data will be used to answer the research questions. In the final thesis submission, some participant data may be quoted but it would be de-identified to protect the identity of participants.

Once the study is completed, circa 2024, the data collected from you will be de-identified and stored securely in the Faculty of Education, Philosophy and Theology at The University of Notre Dame Australia for at least a period of five years. The results of the study will be published as a thesis and peer reviewed publications.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?

Once the data from this study has been analysed, an executive summary of the findings will be shared with all participants. You can expect to receive this feedback at the project's completion in 2024 and will be invited to a presentation of the data around that time.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact Daniel Groenewald at daniel.groenewald@my.nd.edu.au or on 0437 621 516. Alternatively, you can contact Associate Professor Shane Lavery at 8 9433 0173 or shane.lavery@nd.edu.au. We are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study.

What if I have a concern or complaint?

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame Australia (Reference Number: 2021-089F). If you have a concern or complaint regarding the ethical conduct of this research project and would like to speak to an independent person, please contact Notre Dame's Research Ethics Officer at (+61 8) 9433 0943 or research@nd.edu.au. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

How do I sign up to participate?

If you are happy to participate, please sign both copies of the consent form, keep one for yourself and email the other to me.

Thank you for your time. This sheet is for you to keep.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Groenewald, Associate Professor Shane Lavery, Professor Michael O'Neill.

Appendix L

Research Participant Information Sheet - Middle Leader



PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET – Middle Leaders

The characteristics of senior leadership teams in high-performing Western Australian Catholic composite and secondary schools

You are invited to participate in the research project described below.

What is the project about?

The research project will investigate the characteristics of senior leadership teams (SLTs) in West Australian Catholic Composite and Secondary Schools (WACCSS). This research will help address the gap in scholarly and professional knowledge about SLTs. The objective of the research is to find out what characteristics inform SLTs in high performing schools, and to create a high-performing SLT model which could be shared with key stakeholders involved in school improvement in Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA). The perceptions of participants in this research will make a strong contribution to that model.

Who is undertaking the project?

This project is being conducted by Daniel Groenewald and will form the basis of his Doctor of Education degree at The University of Notre Dame Australia, under the supervision of Associate Professor Shane Lavery and Professor Michael O'Neill.

What will I be asked to do?

If you consent to take part in this research study, it is important that you understand the purpose of the study and what you will be asked to do. Please make sure that you ask any questions you may have and that all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction before you agree to participate.

An objective of the study is to describe the characteristics of SLTs through the eyes of all SLT members and various middle leaders.

Middle leaders will be asked to participate in a focus group of approximately five middle leaders for one hour at the middle leader's school. The interview will focus on middle leader perceptions of the characteristics that enhance or inhibit the SLT. The comments and response of middle leader participants will be recorded digitally, analysed, member-checked and coded for key themes regarding the characteristics of SLTs.

Are there any risks associated with participating in this project?

There is a small foreseeable risk for you in participating in the research as the schools may be indentified by readers of the research.

What are the benefits of the research project?

There are three benefits of this research project. First, presently there is no research on effective SLTs in WACCSS. The study has the potential to add to knowledge in the field. Second, there is limited recent research on SLTs in Australian schools. The study could be of interest to other SLTs from similar contexts. Third, many stakeholders in Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA), for example, the CEWA Executive, the Leadership and Employee Services Directorate, the Teaching and Learning Directorate, principals and their SLTs, are engaged in school improvement, leadership, and team development. This research could assist these stakeholders in developing more effective SLTs across CEWA.

What if I change my mind?

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw from further participation at any time without giving a reason and with no negative consequences. However, if you have completed the focus group interview your data cannot be withdrawn because it is difficult to extract your individual data from group recordings and you will not be identified in the recording.

Will anyone else know the results of the project?

Information gathered about you will be held in strict confidence. This confidence will only be broken if required by law. Your data will be de-identified and kept by the researcher on a password protected computer and be shared only with the researchers and his two supervisors, Associate Professor Shane Lavery and Professor Michael O’Neill. Your data will be used to answer the research question. In the final thesis submission, some participant data may be quoted but it would be de-identified to protect the identity of participants.

Once the study is completed, circa 2024, the data will be stored securely in the Faculty of Education, Philosophy and Theology at The University of Notre Dame Australia for at least a period of five years. The results of the study will be published as a thesis and peer reviewed journal articles.

Will I be able to find out the results of the project?

Once the data from this study has been analysed, an executive summary of the findings will be shared with all participants. You can expect to receive this feedback at the project’s completion in 2024 and you will be invited to a presentation of the data around that time.

Who do I contact if I have questions about the project?

If you have any questions about this project, please feel free to contact Daniel Groenewald at daniel.groenewald@my.nd.edu.au or on 0437 621 516. Alternatively, you can contact Associate Professor Shane Lavery at 8 9433 0173 or shane.lavery@nd.edu.au. We are happy to discuss with you any concerns you may have about this study.

What if I have a concern or complaint?

The study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at The University of Notre Dame Australia (approval number #####). If you have a concern or complaint regarding the ethical conduct of this research project and would like to speak to an independent person, please contact Notre Dame’s Research Ethics Officer at (+61 8) 9433 0943 or research@nd.edu.au. Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You will be informed of the outcome.

How do I sign up to participate?

If you are happy to participate, please sign both copies of the consent form, keep one for yourself and email the other to me.

Thank you for your time. This sheet is for you to keep.

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Groenewald, Associate Professor Shane Lavery, Professor Michael O’Neill

Appendix M

Sample Letter to Principal Requesting Permission to Conduct Research at Principal's School



Dear Principal

I am writing to request your permission to conduct research in your school.

My research aims to find out more about the characteristics of senior leadership teams (SLT) in high-performing Western Australian Catholic composite and secondary schools (WACCSS).

I have identified your school as of interest to my research because it consistently improves student learning and has a strong culture of leadership. I believe your SLT will be able to help me better describe the positive characteristics of an effective SLT.

To undertake this research, I would like to invite you, all members of your SLT and two focus groups of middle leaders (5 participants per group), to participate in interviews about the characteristics of the SLT at their school. Their perceptions will contribute to the development of a high performing SLT model that could support other leaders, and CEWA stakeholders, to develop and improve their SLTs. I believe that these findings will help the CEWA system become stronger and serve students more effectively.

To complete this research, I have been granted ethics approval by the University of Notre Dame's Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC). The Reference Number is 2021-089F and the approval letter is attached. I have also completed the necessary research approval forms requested by CEWA for The CEWA Research Approval Panel. The approval letter is attached. Please note CEWA's conditions of approval.

To undertake this research, I will need you to read all the attached documents and sign the consent to research form. Subject to your approval, I would be keen to begin this research in August or September 2021. I anticipate that the research interviews should take roughly 13 hours or 2-3 days in total time at your school.

I am looking forward to engaging in the research and reporting my findings back to you in the form of an executive summary. I will also invite all research participants to a presentation of my research at its completion.

Please feel free to speak with me about any aspects of this research and its impact. My email is Daniel.Groenewald@my.nd.edu.au and my mobile phone number is 0437 621 516. You may also wish to speak to my primary supervisor, Associate Professor, Shane Lavery, about any aspect of this research. His contact details are: Shane.lavery@nd.edu.au, 9433 0173

Yours sincerely,

Daniel Groenewald

Appendix N

Research Approval From the Executive Director of CEWA



CATHOLIC EDUCATION
WESTERN AUSTRALIA
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CATHOLIC EDUCATION

20 July 2021

Mr Daniel Groenewald
Doctoral Candidate; Faculty of Education
The University of Notre Dame Australia
2 Mouat Street
FREMANTLE WA 6959

Dear Daniel

**THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAMS IN HIGH-PERFORMING
WESTERN AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC COMPOSITE AND SECONDARY SCHOOLS – CEWA
REFERENCE RP2021/22**

Thank you for your completed application received 14 April 2021 where your research will focus on three CEWA secondary schools to identify traits which underpin higher performance.

I give in principle support for the selected secondary Catholic schools in Western Australia to participate in this valuable study. However, consistent with Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) policy, participation in your research project will be the decision of the individual principal and staff members. A copy of this letter must be provided to principals when requesting their participation in the research.

The conditions of CEWA approval are as follows:

1. A final copy of the survey questions are to be provided to the CEWA, if they differ from the current draft provided.
2. Given your current role in delivering leadership programs to CEWA school staff, there is the potential for a conflict of interest in dealing with research participants who may also be enrolled in leadership programs. When discussing your research with the respective school leadership teams, please bring this letter and this condition to their attention. If they have any concerns, please request that they direct these to John Nelson – contact below.

Responsibility for quality control of ethics and methodology of the proposed research resides with the institution supervising the research. CEWA notes that The University of Notre Dame Australia Australia Human Research Ethics Committee has granted permission for the duration of this research project (Reference Number: 2021-089F).

Any changes to the proposed methodology will need to be submitted for CEWA approval prior to implementation. The focus and outcomes of your research project are of interest to CEWA. It is therefore a condition of approval that the research findings of this study are forwarded to CEWA.

Further enquiries may be directed to John Nelson at john.nelson@cewa.edu.au or (08) 6380 5313.

I wish you all the best with your research.

Yours sincerely



Dr Debra Sayce
Executive Director

Appendix O

Research Approval From the University of Notre Dame Human Research Ethics Committee



19 Mouat St (PO Box 1225) Fremantle WA 6959
+61 8 9433 0555 | enquiries@nd.edu.au

9 June 2021

A/Prof Shane Lavery & Daniel Groenewald
School of Education
The University of Notre Dame Australia
Fremantle Campus

Dear Shane and Daniel

Reference Number: 2021-089F

Project Title: "The characteristics of senior leadership teams in high-performing Western Australian Catholic composite and secondary schools."

Thank you for submitting the above project for Low Risk ethical review. Your application has been reviewed by a sub-committee of the University of Notre Dame Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007, updated 2018). I am pleased to advise that ethics approval has been granted for this proposed study.

Other researchers identified as working on this project are:

Name	School/Centre	Role
Prof Michael O'Neill	School of Education	Co-Supervisor

**All research projects are approved subject to standard conditions of approval.
Please read the attached document for details of these conditions.**

On behalf of the Human Research Ethics Committee, I wish you well with your study.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Natalie Giles
Research Ethics Officer
Research Office

cc: Prof Dianne Chambers, SRC Chair, School of Education

Broome Campus 88 Guy St (PO Box 2287) Broome WA 6725
Sydney Campus 140 Broadway (PO Box 944) NSW 2007

Fremantle

Broome

Sydney

ABN 69 330 643 210 | CRICOS Provider Code: 01032F

nd.edu.au